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BERNADETTE.

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B E R N A D E T T E

(Sister Marie-Bernard).

THE SEQUEL TO

“OUR LADY OF LOURDES.”

FROM THE FRENCH OF

M. HENRI LASSEUR.

Translated, with the Special Permission of the Author,

BY MRS. F. RAYMOND-BARKER.



THOMAS RICHARDSON AND SON;
AND DERBY.

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BRIEF OF
HIS HOLINESS POPE PIUS IX.

DILECTO FILIO HENRICO LASSEUR.
PIUS PP. IX.

Dilecte Fili, salutem et Apostolicam Benedic-
tionem.

Gratulamur tibi, Dilecte Fili, quod, insigni
auctus beneficio, votum tuum accuratissimo stu-
dio diligentiaque exsolveris; et novam clementis-
simæ Dei matris apparitionem ita testatam facere
curaveris, ut e conflictu ipso humanæ malitiæ
cum cœlesti misericordia claritas eventus firmior
ac luculentior appareret.

Omnes certe in proposita a te rerum serie per-
spicere poterunt, religionem nostram sanctissi-
mam vergere in veram populorum utilitatem;
confluentes ad se omnes supernis juxta et ter-
renis cumulare beneficiis; aptissimam esse ordini
servando, vi etiam submota; concitatos in turbis
animorum motus, licet justos compescere; iisque
rebus sedulo adlaborare Clerum, eumque adeo
abesse a superstitione fovenda, ut imo segniorem

se præbeat ac severiorem aliis omnibus in judicio edendo de factis, quæ naturæ vires excedere videntur. Nec minus aperte patebit, impietatem incassum indixisse religioni bellum, et frustra machinationes hominum divinæ Providentiæ consiliis obstare ; quæ imo nequitia eorum et ausu sic uti consuevit, ut majorem inde quærat operibus suis splendorem et virtutem. Libentissime propterea excepimus volumen tuum, cui titulus *Notre Dame de Lourdes* ; forefidentes, ut quæ per mira potentiae ac benignitatis suæ signa undique frequentissimos advenas accersit, scripto etiam tuo uti velit ad propagandam latius fovendamque in se pietatem hominum ac fiduciam, ut de plenitudine gratiæ ejus omnes accipere possint. Hujus, quem ominamur, exitus labori tuo auspicem accipe Benedictionem Apostolicam, quam tibi grati animi nostri et paternæ benevolentiaæ tem peramanter impertimus.

Datum Romæ, apud St. Petrum, die 4 Septembris, 1869, Pontificatus Nostri Anno XXIV.

PIUS PP. IX.

TRANSLATION OF THE
BRIEF OF HIS HOLINESS PIUS IX.
TO THE AUTHOR OF "OUR LADY OF LOURDES,"
HIS WELL-BELOVED SON HENRY LASSEUR.

Well - Beloved Son, Health and Apostolic
Benediction.

Receive our congratulations, very dear son, since, honoured by a singular benefit, you have succeeded in accomplishing your work with the most accurate research and diligence, and have endeavoured so to establish and demonstrate the new apparition of the most clement Mother of God, that from the conflict itself of human malice with the Divine mercy, the truth of the event should appear stronger and clearer.

In the exposition you have given of every detail, all will be able to see, how our holy religion redounds to the advantage of the people; how it fills those who have recourse to it, not only with spiritual and heavenly benefits, but also with such as are temporal and earthly; that it is most adapted to promote order in the absence of material force; that, in the minds of the multitude, who are disturbed, it appeases emotions, however great; that the clergy zeal-

ously strive for such results, and are so far from favouring superstition, that they show themselves slower and more severe than all others in passing a judgment on facts that seem to be beyond the powers of nature.

Nor less clearly will it be made known, that impiety declares war in vain against religion, and that the wicked uselessly attempt to frustrate the designs of Divine Providence, which ever is wont so to use their wickedness and audacity, as to acquire thence a greater splendour and power in His works.

Therefore, we most willingly accept your volume, the title of which is "Our Lady of Lourdes." We have a faith, that she who, by the wonderful signs of her power and goodness, draws to herself multitudes of pilgrims from every side, wills to make use of your composition, in order to propagate still further, and to nourish towards herself the filial piety and confidence of men, that, out of the fulness of her grace, all may partake. As a pledge of this success for your labour, which we foretell, accept our Apostolic Benediction, which we address to you very affectionately, in testimony of our gratitude and our paternal regard.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, 4th September, 1869, the twenty-fourth year of our Pontificate.

EPISCOPAL APPROBATIONS.

LETTER OF MGR. FORCADE, BISHOP OF NEVERS,* TO M. HENRI LASSEUR.

“ Monsieur,

“ You were so kind as to present me, now some time ago, with your *Notre Dame de Lourdes*. I should have thanked you for it sooner, had I not made a point of first making myself thoroughly acquainted with a work of so much interest and importance.

“ Having carefully perused every word of your book, I cannot content myself by offering you merely ordinary thanks, but also my congratulations, which are as warm as they are sincere. Never did any book prove more attractive to my mind, or more deeply and sweetly touch my heart. It will, I doubt not, obtain the same success with all its readers, whether they have the happiness of believing or not; and therefore I cannot sufficiently desire or promote its diffusion. You have long been universally known, Monsieur, as a talented writer, but you have now proved yourself capable of being, upon occasion, an inspired author; a fact which in no way surprises me.

* The letter of this prelate has a special value, from the fact of his own careful examination of Bernadette, and of all the persons and facts most closely connected with the events at the Grotto of Lourdes.

"The ordering of Divine Providence, which is often inscrutable, having, notwithstanding my unworthiness, conferred upon me the honour of being the guardian and father of the privileged child of Lourdes, I am indebted to you, Monsieur, in a quite exceptional manner, and I beg you to accept the cordial expression of my gratitude.

"**✠ AUGUSTIN, BISHOP OF NEVERS."**

EXTRACT FROM LETTER OF MGR. THE
BISHOP OF TARBES, TO M. HENRI
LASSERRE.

..... "I have received, in the course of my visit, the kind letter you were so good as to send me on the 17th, together with the very remarkable Brief addressed to you by His Holiness Pius IX., on the subject of your book upon *Our Lady of Lourdes*. I congratulate you upon it, and also I congratulate the work of the Grotto. Accept my sincere thanks, both for your letter and its contents.

"I am in no way surprised at the expressions with which the Holy Father eulogises your work. What especially strikes me, and at the same time fills me full of joy, is the fact that the Holy Father pronounces, as it were, upon the fact of the Apparition. Thanks for your book. Glory to MARY IMMACULATE!

"**✠ B. S., BISHOP OF TARBES."**

P R E F A C E .

PROVIDENCE having already permitted us to examine every detail connected with the supernatural origin of the Pilgrimage of Lourdes, has also enabled us to study the lives of the two principal persons chosen by our Blessed Lady as her instruments in the foundation of her work.

Entirely different as were these two persons in outward particulars, there nevertheless existed a close resemblance between their characters. Both alike were gentle, and, at the same time, strong. The one, manly, heroic, and commanding, with the charity of an apostle beneath a rugged exterior, exemplified sweetness in strength. The other, feminine, delicate, and attractive in her humility and simplicity; but, notwithstanding her apparent weakness, invincible, exemplified strength in sweetness.

The Curé Peyramale and Bernadette, alike in perfect harmony with the Divine plan, and inseparable from the work of Mary, together claim a place in the lasting gratitude of men.

The guarding lion and the protected lamb
are now no more on earth.

One day, on the bright festival of our Blessed Lady's Nativity, we closed the eyes of the aged priest, and laid his mortal remains in the unfinished sanctuary, which, like another Esdras, he was building for God: on another, before the Paschal Alleluias had died away, we laid Sister Marie-Bernard in her tomb at the foot of the altar.

And now it seems to us right before God, and in accordance with a very general desire, that, from personal recollections and those of others, we should record the hitherto unpublished particulars of these two lives, and thus complete the portraits of the favoured child of Lourdes, and of the Priest of the Immaculate Conception.....

The life of Mgr. Peyramale will shortly follow this of Bernadette, now given to the public.

The life of Bernadette naturally divides itself into three parts.

For the account of her public life we have only to reproduce in order those portions relating to her in our former work, entitled "*Our Lady of Lourdes.*" In spite of a certain hesitation to reprint what has already been pub-

lished, we feel it necessary to do so, as otherwise her portrait would lack some of its principal features, and the unity of her life be destroyed. To show the part she fulfilled in the (written) history of our Lady of Lourdes, and the firm and unvarying character of her testimony, we have only to consult our personal recollections, and publish a few pages from our private notes. Lastly, to portray Sister Marie Bernard in her calm convent-life, we have but to repeat the accounts given to ourselves by the pious companions of this venerated Sister.

More than any one else, we are conscious of the imperfections and shortcomings of our work; but whatever other merit it may lack, it at least possesses that of scrupulous accuracy, both in letter and in spirit. We have, besides, made it our duty to lay before the Congregation of the Sisters at Nevers all the portion which relates to the life of Sister Marie Bernard from the day of her entrance into religion. They alone were the witnesses of this hidden life, and, with regard to it, we have been careful only to publish a narrative corrected and

verified by them, and to which they have been able to give their entire consent and approval.

May the blessing of God accompany this present volume, as well as that by which it will shortly be followed.

In these sad times, when an antagonistic multitude is in arms against the Christian Congregations and the Priesthood, may our Lady of Lourdes make these pages instrumental in showing those who know not, and in reminding those who forget, what a priceless pearl in the midst of her convent is the true Religious, and what a luminous diamond amid the shadows of the outer world is the true Priest of Jesus Christ.

Paris, Feast of St. Bernard,
August 20th, 1879.

BERNADETTE.

I.

It is, it seems to me, a trite remark that everything is a contrast on this earth, where good and bad, rich and poor, are mixed together, and where the cottage of the poor is sometimes separated only by a simple wall from the residence of a rich personage. On one side are found all the pleasures of an easy life, agreeably spent amid the most refined pursuits, and every comfort and elegancy of life; on the other, the horrors of misery, cold, hunger, disease, the sorrowful accompaniments of human sufferings. Around the first are adulations, assiduous visits, loud professions of friendship; around the others, indifference, solitude, and abandonment. Whether from fear of the importunity of formal or tacit applications, or whether it fears, like a reproach, the spectacle of this frightful destitution, the world shuns the poor and maintains itself aloof from him. The rich, forming themselves into an exclusive circle, which their pride calls "good society," consider as having but a secondary existence, unworthy of their attention, all that is exterior to them, all that does not belong to the high class

called "gens comme il faut." When they give employment to a workman, even when they help the needy, they treat him as a protégé, as an inferior; they do not deal with him in the same simple and kindly manner as they would with one of themselves. With the exception of some rare Christians, none concerns himself with the poor man as with a brother and an equal. With the exception of the saints,—alas! but thinly sown in the times in which we live,—who would think of showing him the respect which we have for a superior? In the world, properly so called, in the vast world, the poor is absolutely abandoned. Overwhelmed under the burden of labour, exhausted with want, disdained and forsaken, does it not seem as if he were cursed by the Creator of the earth? And yet, it is precisely the reverse; he is the beloved of the Universal Father. Whilst the world has been cursed by the infallible word of Christ, it is the poor, the suffering, the humble, the lowly, who are for God the "good society," the chosen society in which His Heart is well pleased. "You are My friends," He says, in His Gospel; He does more, He identifies Himself with them, only opening heaven to the rich inasmuch as they shall have been the benefactors of the needy: "What you have done to the least of My little ones, you have done it unto Me."

Thus, when the Son of God came on earth, He willed to be poor, to live and die in the midst of the poor, to be Himself a poor man. It is from them He took His apostles, His principal disciples, the first-born of His Church. In the his-

tory, already long, of His Church, it is on the poor that He has generally poured out His spiritual graces. At all times, and with few exceptions, apparitions, visions, particular revelations, have been the privilege of these poor and little ones, whom the world despises.

For nearly two thousand years the words of the Apostle have been verified: "The foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that He may confound the wise; and the weak things of the world hath God chosen, that He may confound the strong."*

The narrative which we are about to give will perhaps furnish some proofs of this deep truth.

II.

The 11th of February, 1858, inaugurated the week of profane rejoicings which, according to an immemorial usage, precede the austerities of Lent. It was the day of Jeudi-gras. The weather was cold, rather cloudy, but very calm. In the depths of the sky the clouds were motionless. No breeze stirred them, and the atmosphere was perfectly tranquil. Occasionally there fell a few drops of rain.

On this same day, in accordance with the particular privileges of its proper Offices, the Diocese of Tarbes celebrated the festival of the illustrious shepherdess of France, St. Genevieve.

It had already struck eleven o'clock at the church of Lourdes.

* 1 Cor. i. 27.

Whilst almost everywhere preparations were being made for joyful meetings and festivities, a family of poor people, who lived as lodgers in a wretched house in the Rue des Petits-Fosses, had not even wood to cook their sorry dinner.

The father, still a young man, followed the trade of a miller, and had for some time rented the little mill situated on the north of the town, upon one of the streams that cast themselves into the Gave. But this employment requires money in hand, people being accustomed to get their corn ground on credit, and the poor miller for this reason had been obliged to give up renting the little mill, where his labour, far from enabling him to live at ease, had contributed to throw him into greater want. In the expectation of better days he worked, not indeed at home, for he had nothing in the world, not even a little garden, but in different directions, among such of his neighbours as gave him employment from time to time by the day.

His name was François Soubirous, and he was married to a very worthy woman, Louise Casterot, a good Christian, who encouraged him to hope for the best.

They had four children; two girls, of whom the eldest was about fourteen; and two boys much younger, the last was about three or four years old.

Their eldest daughter, a weakly child, had only lived with them for fifteen days. It is this little girl that has to sustain an important part in our narrative, and we have studied with care all the particulars and details of her life.

After her birth, her mother, who was at that time in weak health, had not strength to suckle her, and placed her out to nurse in the neighbouring village of Bartrés, where the child remained until weaned.

Louise Soubirous had become a mother a second time, and two children to look to at once would have kept her at home, and hindered her from going out into the fields, or elsewhere, to work, which she could easily do with only one to nurse. It was for that reason that the parents left their eldest child at Bartrés; paying for her keep, sometimes in money and sometimes in kind, a pension of five francs a month.

When the little girl was old enough to make herself useful, and there was a question of sending for her to her own home, the good peasants who had nursed her found themselves as fond of her as if she were one of their children. From this moment they took charge of her for nothing, employing her to tend the sheep. She grew up thus in the midst of this adopted family, passing all her days in solitude, on the desert hills where her humble flock was feeding.

As to prayers, she knew none whatever except her Rosary. Whether it was that her nursing mother had recommended it to her, or whether rather it was from an artless sense of *need* in this innocent soul, everywhere and at all times did she recite this, the prayer of the simple. Then she amused herself quite alone with those toys of nature which a Fatherly Providence furnishes for the children of the poor, who are more easy to satisfy in this, as in all other

things, than the children of the rich ; she played with the stones, which she heaped up into tiny edifices ;—with the plants and flowers, which she collected here and there ;—with the water of the streams, into which she cast, and followed with her eye, immense fleets of blades of grass ; she played with her favourite in the flock confided to her care : “ Of all my lambs,” she said, one day, “ there is one which I love the best.” —“ And which is it ? ” she was asked. “ That which I love best is the least of all.” And she took a delight in caressing and sporting with it.

She was herself, among children, like this poor lamb which she loved, weak and small. Though now fourteen years old, she did not look more than eleven or twelve. Without being, however, sickly, she was oppressed with asthma, which often caused her to suffer much. She bore this trial patiently, and accepted physical pain with that tranquil resignation which seems so difficult to the rich, and which the poor appear to find so natural.

In this innocent and solitary school was it, that the poor shepherdess learned what the world is ignorant of, that simplicity which is so pleasing to God. Far removed from every dangerous influence, spending her time, as it were, with the Blessed Virgin Mary, and passing her hours in crowning her with the prayers of her rosary, she preserved her perfect openness of character, with that baptismal purity which the breath of the world tarnishes so quickly, even among the best.

Such was the soul of this child, limpid and

peaceful as those unknown lakes lost amid lofty mountains, and in which are reflected in silence all the splendours of heaven. "Blessed are the clean of heart," says the Gospel, "for they shall see God."

These great gifts are hidden gifts, and the humility which possesses them is, itself, usually ignorant of them. This little girl was now fourteen years of age, and although all who chanced to approach her felt themselves drawn to her by a secret charm, she was unconscious of it, and regarded herself as the last and most backward child of her age. She knew not how to read or to write. Still more, she was altogether a stranger to the French language, and only knew her poor Pyrenean patois. She had never learnt her catechism. On this, her ignorance was extreme. The *Our Father*, the *Hail Mary*, the *Apostles' Creed*, the *Glory be to the Father*, recited as she said her Rosary, constituted all her knowledge of religion.

After such details, it is needless to add that she had never made her first Communion. It was precisely to prepare her for it, and send her to be instructed in the Catechism, that the Soubirous had withdrawn her from the out-of-the-way village inhabited by her nursing parents, and brought her home to Lourdes, notwithstanding their excessive poverty.

She had been at home a fortnight. Being anxious on account of her asthma and weak health, her mother bestowed particular care upon her. Whilst the other children of the Soubirous went barefooted in their sabots, she

had stockings in hers; whilst her sister and brothers ran about freely out of doors, she had almost continually to make herself useful at home; although, from being accustomed to the open air, she would have greatly preferred to go out.

On this day, then,—Jeudi-Gras,—eleven o'clock had struck, and these poor people had no wood to prepare their dinner.

"Go and gather some on the banks of the Gave, or on the common," said the mother to Marie, her second daughter.

As in many other parts, the poor had, in the commune of Lourdes, the right of gathering the branches blown from the trees, and the dry wood which the torrent deposited and left among the pebbles on the bank.

Marie put on her sabots.

The eldest, she of whom we have spoken, the little shepherdess of Bartrés, looked at her sister longingly.

"Let me go with her," she said to her mother. "I, too, will bring back a little bundle of wood."

"No," replied Louise Soubirous; "you are coughing, and you will get ill."

Another girl, from a neighbouring house, Jeanne Abadiè, about fifteen years of age, had entered in the meanwhile, and was also getting ready to go and gather wood. They all joined their entreaties, and the mother at last gave her consent.

The child at this moment, as is customary

with the peasants of the south, had on her head a handkerchief, tied on one side.

This did not appear enough to the mother.

"Take your capulet," she said.

The capulet is a very graceful garment, peculiar to the people of the Pyrenees, forming a head-dress and a mantle at the same time. It is a sort of hood, made of thick woollen cloth, sometimes white, like the fleece of sheep, sometimes of bright red, which covers the head and falls behind on the shoulders, reaching a little below the waist. When it is very cold or windy the women throw it back in front and fold their neck and arms in it; when this garment seems too warm, they fold it up in a square, and carry it on their head as a sort of square cap.

The capulet of the little shepherdess of Bartrés was white.

III.

The three children left the town, and, crossing the bridge, soon arrived at the left bank of the Gave. They passed by the mill of M. de Laffitte, and entered the island of Châlet, looking everywhere for bits of wood in order to make up their little fagot.

They descended the meadow as they followed the course of the Gave. The weak child whom the mother had hesitated to allow to go out, walked a little behind; less fortunate than her two companions, she had found nothing as yet, and her apron was empty, whilst that of her

sister and Jeanne began to be stocked with little branches and chips.

Clad in a black dress very much worn and mended, her delicate countenance wrapped in the white capulet, which covered her head, and fell back over her shoulders, her feet enclosed within her rough sabots, she had an innocent and rustic grace which charmed the heart even more than the eye.

She was small for her age. Though her infantine features were a little sunburnt, they had lost nothing of their native delicacy. Her hair, black and fine, scarcely appeared under her handkerchief. Her forehead, mostly uncovered, exhibited an incomparable purity of outline. Under her well arched eyebrows, her brown eyes, milder in her than blue, possessed a deep and tranquil beauty, of which no evil passion had ever troubled the limpid splendour. It was the simple eye of which the Gospel speaks. Her mouth, marvellously expressive, indicated an habitual sweetness of disposition, and compassion for every kind of suffering. Her countenance, gentle, intelligent, and pleasing, possessed an extraordinary attraction, which won the heart. What was this attraction? I was going to say, What was this ascendancy, this secret authority, in this poor child, so ignorant and clad in rags? It was the greatest and the rarest thing in the world: the majesty of innocence.

We have not as yet uttered her name. She had for her patron a great Doctor of the Church, he whose genius was more particularly sheltered under the protection of the Mother of God, the

author of the *Memorare*,—("Remember, O most pious Virgin Mary,")—the admirable St. Bernard. However, according to a custom which has its gracefulness, this great name, given to a humble peasant girl, had taken an infantile and rustic turn. The little girl's name, graceful like herself, was Bernadette.

She followed her sister and her companion along the mill meadow, and sought without success, amongst the grass, for some pieces of wood to light the fire at home.

Such must have been Ruth or Noemi when they went to glean in the fields of Booz.

IV.

The three children, walking thus, had reached the bottom of the Isle of Châlet, immediately in front of the triple excavation which the grotto of Massabielle presented to view. They were only separated from it by the course of the mill-stream, usually very rapid, that washed the base of the rocks.

Now, on this day it happened that the mill of Savy was undergoing some repair, and the current having been, as much as possible, closed up, the canal was, if not altogether dry, at any rate very easy to cross; there was scarcely a narrow rivulet.

Some branches of dry wood, fallen from the different bushes growing in the clefts of the rock, were strewn about this deserted place, which the accidental drying up of the canal

rendered at this moment more accessible than usual.

Overjoyed at this piece of good fortune, diligent and active as Martha in the Gospel, Jeanne and Marie quickly took off their sabots and crossed the stream.

"The water is very cold," said they, when they reached the opposite bank, and were putting on their sabots.

It was in the month of February, and these torrents from the mountains, flowing freshly from the eternal snows in which their source is formed, are generally of a glacial temperature.

Bernadette, less alert or less ardent, being weakly also, was still on this side of the little water-course. It was quite a difficulty to her to cross this feeble current. She had stockings on, whilst Marie and Jeanne had bare feet with sabots, and she had to pull off her shoes.

On hearing the exclamation of her companions she shrank from venturing through the icy water.

"Throw two or three large stones into the middle of the stream," said she, "so that I may get over with dry feet."

The two wood gleaners were already occupied in arranging their little fagot. They did not wish to lose time in putting themselves to any trouble.

"Do as we did," replied Jeanne, "cross over barefoot."

Bernadette submitted, and leaning her back against a boulder of rock, began to undo her shoes.

It was about mid-day. The *Angelus* would at that moment be ringing from all the village steeples in the Pyrenees.

V.

She was in the act of taking off her first stocking, when she heard around her something like the noise of a blast of wind rising in the meadow with unusual and irresistible power.

She thought it was a sudden hurricane, and instinctively turned round. To her amazement, the poplars which border the Gave were perfectly motionless. Not even the slightest breeze stirred their still branches.

"I must have been mistaken," she said to herself.

And, thinking still about this noise, she did not know how to account for it.

She sat down again to take off her shoes.

At this moment the impetuous rushing of this unknown wind was heard again.

Bernadette lifted her head, looked in front of her, and immediately uttered, or endeavoured to utter, a scream, which was stifled in her throat. She trembled in all her members. Astounded, dazzled, and almost overwhelmed by what she saw before her, she sank down; bending low, she fell upon her knees.

A spectacle truly marvellous had just struck her sight. The description given by the child, the countless questions which a thousand shrewd and investigating minds have put to her since

this date, the precise and minute particulars into which so many persons of acute intelligence have forced her to enter, allow of our tracing with a sure hand every detail, as well as the general physiognomy of the portrait of the wonderful being who appeared at this moment to the eyes of the terrified and ravished Bernadette.

VI.

Above the grotto, before which Marie and Jeanne, busy and stooping towards the ground, were picking up bits of wood, and in the rustic niche formed by the rock, there stood upright, in the midst of a superhuman brightness, a lady of incomparable splendour.

The unspeakable shining which floated around her did not disturb nor hurt the eyes like the brightness of the sun. Quite on the contrary, the aureole, bright as a sheaf or fasces of rays, and peaceful as a deep shadow, invincibly attracted the gaze, which seemed to bathe and repose in it with delight. It was like the morning star, the light in the coolness of the day. There was, besides, nothing vague or vapourous in the apparition itself. It had none of the fugitive outlines of a vision of the fancy; it was a living reality, a human body, which to the eye appeared to be palpable as the flesh of any one of us, and which only differed from that of an ordinary person by its glory, and by its inexpressible and divine beauty.

It was of middle stature. It seemed to be quite young, and had the graces of twenty years of age; but without losing anything of its tender delicacy, that splendour, fugitive in time, had in it a character that was eternal. Still more, in the heavenly contour of its features were blended, in a manner, without disturbing its harmony, the successive and isolated beauties of the four seasons of human life. The innocent frankness of a child, the absolute purity of a Virgin, the tender gravity of the highest of Maternities, a wisdom superior to that of all accumulated ages, were summed up and combined, without detriment to one another, in this marvellous countenance of a young maiden. To what are we to compare it in this decayed world, where the rays of the beautiful are scattered, broken, and tarnished, and where they can never appear to us without some alloy? Every image, every comparison, would be a lowering of this indescribable type. No majesty in the universe, no distinction in this world, no simplicity here below, can give an idea of it, nor help us better to understand it. It is not with the lamps of earth that we can throw light on the constellations of heaven.

The very regularity and ideal purity of these features, in which there was nothing inconsistent with the rest, remove them beyond the reach of description. We must nevertheless state that the oval curve of the countenance possessed an exquisite grace, that the eyes were blue, and had a sweetness that seemed as if they could melt the heart of any upon whom they rested.

The lips breathed a divine benignity. The brow appeared the throne of highest wisdom, that is, a knowledge of all things, joined to boundless virtue.

The garments, of an unknown material, woven doubtless in the mysterious looms which clothe the lily of the valley, were white as the spotless snow on the mountains, and grander in their simplicity than the dazzling vesture of Solomon in his glory. The robe, long and trailing, fell in chaste folds below her feet, which rested on the rock, and trod lightly the branch of sweet briar growing there. Her feet were bare, and upon each bloomed the mystical rose, of a golden colour.

A broad girdle, blue as the sky, and half-tied round the body, hung in front in two long bands that touched almost the top of the feet. Behind, enveloping in its folds the shoulders and the upper part of the arms, a white veil, fixed round the head, descended to the bottom of the robe.

Neither ring, nor necklace, nor diadem, nor jewels; none of those ornaments with which human vanity at all times is adorned. A Rosary, the beads of which were white as drops of milk, the chain of which was as yellow as the gold of the harvest, hung in her hands, that were fervently joined together. The beads of the rosary slid one after the other through her fingers. Nevertheless, the lips of this Queen of Virgins remained motionless. Instead of reciting the Rosary, she perhaps listened in her own heart to the eternal echo of the Angelical

Salutation and the immense murmur of invocations that came from the earth. Each bead that she touched was without doubt a shower of heavenly graces, falling upon souls like pearls of dew into the chalices of flowers.

She kept silence; but later on her own words and the miraculous facts which we shall have to describe, will attest that she was the Immaculate Virgin, the most august and most holy Mary, Mother of God.

VII.

The child, in the first moment of stupefaction, had instinctively placed her hand upon her rosary; and holding it in her fingers, she wished to make the sign of the cross, and lift her hand to her forehead. But her terror was such that she had not the strength to raise her arm; it fell down powerless on her bended knees.

“*Nolite timere*”—“Fear not,” said Jesus to His disciples, when He came to them walking upon the waves of the Sea of Tiberias.

The look, the smile of the incomparable Virgin, seemed to say the same thing to the trembling little shepherdess.

With a grave and gentle gesture, which seemed as if it were an all-powerful benediction for earth and heaven, she herself, as if to encourage the child, made the sign of the cross. And the hand of Bernadette, raising itself by degrees, as if invisibly lifted by her who is

called the Help of Christians, made the sign of the cross at the same time.

"*Ego sum, nolite timere*"—"It is I Myself, fear not," said Jesus to His disciples.

The child had no longer any fear. Dazzled, charmed, doubting herself, nevertheless, at moments, rubbing her eyes, and yet constantly attracted by this celestial apparition, not knowing what to think, she humbly recited her rosary: "I believe in God"—"Hail Mary, full of grace."

As she was going to finish it by saying, "Glory be to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, world without end," the radiant Virgin disappeared, doubtless returning to the eternal heaven where the Holy Trinity dwells.

Bernadette experienced the feeling of one who falls down again from a height. She looked round her. The Gave flowed on as usual, murmuring against the pebble stones and the broken rocks; but the sound seemed to her harsher than before, the waters appeared more sombre, the scenery more dull, the light of the sun less bright. Before her lay the rocks of Massabielle, beneath which her companions were gleaning bits of wood. Above the grotto, the niche in which the branch of sweet briar reposèd was still open; but nothing unusual appeared in it, there was no trace left there of the divine vision—it was no longer the gate of heaven.

VIII.
"

The scene which we have just related lasted about a quarter of an hour; not that Bernadette had any consciousness of the time, but it could be measured by the fact of her having said the five decades of her rosary.

Completely returned to herself, Bernadette finished taking off her shoes, crossed the little rivulet, and rejoined her companions. Absorbed by the thought of what she had just seen, she no longer shrank from the coldness of the water. All the powers of the humble child were concentrated on the thought of this unheard-of apparition.

Jeanne and Marie had seen her fall on her knees, and pray; but that is nothing unusual, thanks be to God, among the children of the Pyrenees, and being occupied in their task, they had paid no attention to it.

Bernadette was surprised at the perfect calm of her sister and Jeanne, who had, just at that moment, finished their little labour, and, entering under the grotto, had begun to play as if nothing extraordinary had taken place.

"Have you then seen nothing?" she asked.

They then remarked that she appeared agitated and affected.

"No," they answered. "And you? Have you seen anything?"

Did the child at first fear, if she spoke of it, to profane the sweet impression that filled her

soul? Did she desire to enjoy it in silence? Was she reserved through a sort of fearful timidity? In any case, she obeyed that instinct of humble souls to hide as a treasure the particular graces with which God favours them.

"If you have seen nothing," said she, "I have nothing to tell you."

The little fagots were made up. The three children resumed their path to Lourdes. But Bernadette had been unable to dissemble her trouble. As they went along, Marie and Jeanne tormented her to know what she had seen. The little shepherdess yielded to their entreaties, and their promise to keep the secret.

"I have seen," said she, "something dressed in white."

And she described to them, in her own language, her marvellous vision.

"That is what I have seen," said she, in conclusion; "but I beg of you to say nothing about it."

Marie and Jeanne doubted not. The soul, in its early purity and innocence, is naturally believing, and doubt is not the malady of artless childhood. Moreover, the earnest and sincere tone of Bernadette, still greatly moved, had an irresistible influence. Marie and Jeanne doubted not, but they were frightened. The children of the poor are always timid. This is easy to explain; suffering comes to them from every side.

"It is perhaps something to do us harm," said they. "Do not let us go there again, Bernadette."

Scarcely had they reached the house, when the

confidants of the little shepherdess were no longer able to keep their secret. Marie related every thing to her mother.

"These are childish tales," said she. "What is this, then, that your sister tells me?" she resumed, asking Bernadette.

The latter repeated her account.

The mother Soubirous shrugged her shoulders.

"You are mistaken. It was nothing at all. You thought you saw something, but it was nothing. These are fancies,—mere childish nonsense."

Bernadette persisted in her story.

"At all events," replied the mother, "you are not to go there again: I forbid it."

This prohibition struck Bernadette to the heart; for, ever since the apparition had vanished, her greatest desire was to see it again.

Nevertheless she submitted, and said no more.

IX.

Two days, Friday and Saturday, passed. This extraordinary event was continually present in the mind of Bernadette, and formed the constant subject of her conversations with Marie, Jeanne, and a few other children. Bernadette had still, in the depth of her soul, and in all its sweetness, the remembrance of the heavenly vision. A passion, if we may use so profane a word to designate a feeling so pure, had sprung up in the innocent heart of the little girl;—an ardent desire to see again the incomparable

Lady. This name of "Lady" was that which she gave her in her rustic language. Nevertheless, when she was asked if this apparition resembled any of the ladies whom she saw, whether in the street or in the church, or any one of those who were celebrated in the country for their remarkable beauty, she shook her head and smiled gently.

"Nothing of all that gives any idea of it," she said. "Her beauty cannot be described."

She longed therefore to see her again. The other children were divided between curiosity and fear.

X.

On Sunday, the sun rose brightly and the weather was magnificent. There are often, in the Pyrenean valleys, some spring-like days, warm and pleasant, that have as it were lost their way in the season of winter.

On returning from Mass, Bernadette begged her sister Marie, Jeanne, and two or three other children, to press her mother to take off her prohibition, and allow them to return to the Rocks of Massabielle.

"Perhaps it is something bad," said the children.

Bernadette replied that she did not at all believe so;—that it was impossible, and that she had never seen a countenance so marvelously kind.

"At all events," replied the little girls, who,

better instructed than the poor shepherdess of Bartrès, knew a little of the catechism ; “at all events, we must throw some holy water upon it. If it is the devil he will go away. You will say to it: ‘If you come on the part of God, approach ; if you come from the devil, begone !’”

It was not, at all events, the formula precisely prescribed for exorcism ; but in reality these little theologians at Lourdes reasoned in this affair with as much justice and prudence as could have been done by a Doctor of the Sorbonne.

It was then decided, in this juvenile council, that they should take some holy water with them. A certain degree of apprehension had likewise come over Bernadette herself, in consequence of these little discourses.

There remained only the obtaining permission. This, the children, all together, asked after dinner. The mother Soubirous wished at first to adhere to her prohibition, alleging that the Gave went by the Rocks of Massabielle, that there might be some danger, that it would soon be time for Vespers, that they must not make themselves late, that these were childish fancies, &c. But we know to what an extent of pressure and irresistible entreaty a legion of children will go. All promised to be very prudent, expeditious, and well behaved, and the mother finished by giving in to them.

The little group went to church, and prayed there for a short time. One of the companions of Bernadette had brought a half-pint bottle ; they filled it with holy water.

When they reached the grotto, there was, at first, nothing unusual to be seen.

"Let us pray," said Bernadette, "and say the rosary."

And the children knelt down and began the recitation of the rosary, each one apart.

All at once the countenance of Bernadette appeared to be transformed, and was so, in fact. An extraordinary emotion was depicted on every feature; her gaze, more radiant, seemed to penetrate into a light that was divine.

With her feet placed upon the rock, clad as at the first time, the marvellous apparition manifested itself anew.

"Look," she said, "she is there!"

Alas! the sight of the other children was not, like hers, miraculously divested of the veil of flesh which hinders us from seeing spiritualized bodies. The little girls only perceived the desert rock and the branches of sweet briar, which descended, forming a thousand arabesques, to the foot of the mysterious niche where Bernadette contemplated an unknown being.

Nevertheless, the countenance of Bernadette was such that doubt was impossible. One of the children placed the bottle of holy water in the hands of the favoured girl.

Then Bernadette, remembering her promise, arose, and shaking quickly and repeatedly the little bottle, sprinkled the wonderful lady, who graciously remained at some paces before her, in the interior of the niche.

"If you come on the part of God, approach," said Bernadette.

At these words and gestures of the child, the Virgin several times bowed her head, and advanced almost to the edge of the rock. She seemed to smile at the precautions of Bernadette, and at her weapons of war, while, at the sacred name of God, her countenance lighted up with increased radiance.

"If you come on the part of God, approach," said Bernadette.

But, seeing her so beautiful, so resplendent with glory, so adorned with heavenly goodness, she felt her heart fail her at the moment of adding, "If you come on the part of the devil, begone." These words, which had been dictated to her, seemed monstrous in the presence of this incomparable being, and they fled for ever from her thoughts, without even mounting to her lips.

She prostrated again, and continued to recite her rosary, to which the Blessed Virgin seemed to listen, while passing her own through her fingers.

When it was ended, the apparition vanished.

XI.

In resuming the road to Lourdes, Bernadette was full of joy. She ruminated in the depth of her soul on these most extraordinary events. Her companions conceived a vague terror. The transformation of the countenance of Bernadette had shown them the reality of a supernatural

apparition. Now all that surpasses nature, alarms it. "Depart from us, O Lord, for fear lest we die," said the Jews in the Old Testament.

"We are afraid, Bernadette. Let us not go back there. What you have seen may do us harm," said her timid companions.

As they had promised, the children returned for Vespers. As they came out of church, the beauty of the weather attracted on the way a portion of the population, strolling and chatting in the last rays of the sun, so soft during these splendid days of winter. The story of the little girls circulated here and there among the different companies of pedestrians. And it is thus that the report of these strange occurrences commenced to spread about the town. The rumour, which at first only agitated a humble company of children, increased like a wave which mounts and penetrates from one to another of the popular circles. The quarry men, who are very numerous in this country, the sempstresses, the workmen, the peasants, the servant maids, the householders, the poor people, held discussions together; some were for believing in it, some for disputing it, others for laughing at it, several for exaggerating it, and amplifying the account of this pretended fact of the apparition. Save one or two exceptions, the townspeople did not take even the trouble to dwell upon these fancies of children.

Strange occurrence! The father and mother, though they fully believed in the sincerity of Bernadette, considered the apparition as an illusion.

"She is a child," said they. "She thought she saw it; but she has seen nothing. They are the imaginations of a little girl."

Nevertheless, the extraordinary precision of the statements of Bernadette engaged their attention. Sometimes, struck by the tone and accent of their daughter, they felt themselves shaken in their incredulity. While desiring that she should not go any more to the grotto, they no longer dared to forbid her.

She nevertheless did not return there till Thursday.

XII.

During these first days of the week, several persons among the people called on the Soubirous, and interrogated Bernadette. The answers of the girl were frank and precise. She might be under an illusion; but it sufficed to see her and hear her, to be satisfied of her good faith. Her perfect simplicity, her innocent age, the irresistible accent of her words, her whole manner, carried with them a most astonishing authority, which inspired confidence, and usually secured conviction. All who saw her came away from their interview completely satisfied as to her veracity, and persuaded that an extraordinary fact had taken place at the rocks of Massabielle.

The declaration of a little ignorant girl could not, however, be enough to establish a fact so entirely out of the ordinary course of things;

other proofs were required besides the word of a child.

What, besides, was this apparition, supposing it to be real? Was it a spirit of light, or an angel of the abyss? Was it some soul in a state of suffering, wandering and asking for prayers? Or was it such or such a person, not long since dead, in the odour of sanctity, and manifesting itself in its glory? Faith and superstition started each of these hypotheses.

The mournful ceremonies of Ash Wednesday contributed to dispose towards one or other of these solutions two persons of Lourdes. Did they see, in the dazzling whiteness of the dress of the apparition, some idea of the winding-sheet or appearance of a phantom? We know not. The younger lady's name was Antoinette Peyret, and she was one of the Congregation of Mary; the other was Madame Millet.

"It is without doubt some soul from purgatory, who is asking for Masses," thought they; and they went to visit Bernadette.

"Ask that lady who she is, and what she wishes," they said. "Let her explain herself to you, or better still, as you might not understand her well, let her put it into writing."

Bernadette, who felt herself by an interior motion strongly impelled to return to the grotto, obtained leave again from her parents; and the following morning, Thursday, the 18th February, towards six o'clock, at dawn of day, after having heard Mass at the church at half-past five o'clock, she, with Antoinette Peyret and Madame Millet, took the way to the grotto.

XIII.

The repairs of the mill belonging to Monsieur de Laffitte were finished, and the mill stream had been restored to its free course, so that it was impossible to pass, as before, by the island of Châlet, in order to reach the end of the journey. It was necessary to go up by the flank of the Espélugues, by taking a very toilsome road which led to the forest of Lourdes, then come down again by a precipitous way to the grotto, in the midst of the rocks and hillocks, steep and sandy, of Massabielle.

With these unexpected difficulties before them, the two companions of Bernadette were a little frightened. She herself, on the contrary, having come to this spot, experienced a fluttering, a hurry, as it were, to arrive. It seemed to her that some invisible being assisted her up, and gave her an unaccustomed energy. She who was usually so weak, felt herself at once quite strong. Her step became so swift at the ascent of the rocks, that Antoinette and Madame Millet, both in the prime of life, could with difficulty follow her. Her asthma, which hindered all quickness in walking, appeared to have momentarily disappeared. When she got to the top, she was neither out of breath nor fatigued. Whilst her two companions were melting with heat, her face was calm and composed. She came down the rocks, which she traversed, nevertheless, for the first time, with the same

ease and activity, having ever the consciousness of an invisible support that guided and sustained her. Over those almost perpendicular declivities, in the midst of rolling stones, above the abyss, her step was as firm and safe as if she walked on the broad and level soil of a high road. Madame Millet and Antoinette did not attempt to follow her at this impossible pace. They came down with the slowness and caution necessitated by so perilous a path.

Bernadette arrived, consequently, at the grotto a few minutes before them. She fell upon her knees, began to say her Rosary, while looking at the niche, still empty, which was tapestried by the branches of the sweet briar.

All at once she uttered a cry. The well-known brightness of the aureole shone at the bottom of the excavation. The marvellous apparition displayed itself once more, standing above her at some paces distant. The admirable Virgin inclined her countenance, illuminated with eternal serenity, towards the child; and with a gesture of her hand beckoned to her to approach.

At this moment, after a thousand painful efforts, the two companions of Bernadette, Antoinette and Madame Millet, arrived. They perceived the features of the child transformed in ecstasy.

She heard and saw them approach.

"She is there," said she. "She is making me a sign to advance."

"Ask her if she is displeased that we should be here with you. If so, we will go away."

Bernadette cast her eyes on the Virgin, invisible to all but herself, listened a moment, and turned to her companions.

" You may remain ; " she answered.

The two women went on their knees by the side of the child, and lighted a blessed taper which they had brought with them.

It was doubtless the first time, since the creation of the world, that such a gleam had shone in this wild spot. This simple act, which seemed to inaugurate a sanctuary, had in itself a mysterious solemnity. Supposing that the apparition was divine, this sign of visible adoration, this little humble flame, lit up by two lowly women of the country, would not again be extinguished, and would go on increasing through a long series of ages. The breath of incredulity will vainly exhaust itself in efforts against it, the storm of persecution will rise in vain ; this flame, fed by the faith of the people, will continue to mount, erect and inextinguishable, to the throne of God. While these rustic hands, without doubt unconsciously to themselves, first lighted it thus in all simplicity, in this unknown grotto where a child was praying, the grey dawn had successively assumed a hue of gold and then of purple, and the sun, which soon, through the clouds and in spite of them, would inundate the earth with his light, began to appear from behind the summit of the mountains.

Bernadette, ravished in ecstacy, contemplated the Beauty without spot. *Thou art all fair, my beloved. There is no spot in thee.*

Her companions called to her again.

"Advance to her, since she summons you and makes you a sign. Approach. Ask her who she is? Wherefore she has come here? Is it a soul from Purgatory who implores our prayers, who wishes to have Masses said for her?..... Beg of her to write what she desires on this paper. We are ready to do everything she wishes, all that is necessary for her repose."

The girl took the paper, ink and pen which they gave her, and went forward to the apparition, whose maternal look encouraged her to approach.

Nevertheless, at every step that the child took the apparition gradually retired into the interior of the excavation. Bernadette lost sight of it for an instant, and penetrated under the vault of the grotto below. There, still above her but much nearer, in the opening of the niche, she again beheld the Holy Virgin surrounded with rays.

Bernadette, holding in her hand the objects which had been given her, stood up on her feet to reach, with her little arms and her low stature, to the height where the Supernatural Being stood above.

Her two companions also stepped forward to try to hear the conversation which she was about to hold. But Bernadette, without turning round, and as if obeying a gesture of the apparition, made them a sign with her hand not to approach.

Quite confused, they withdrew a little aside.

"My lady," said the child, "if you have anything to communicate to me, would you have

the goodness to write who you are and what you desire?"

The heavenly Virgin smiled at this simple request. Her lips opened, and she spoke.

"What I have to tell you," replied she, "I have no need to write. Do me only the favour to come here during fifteen days."

"I promise you to do so," said Bernadette.

The Blessed Virgin smiled again, and made a sign that she was satisfied, showing also her full confidence in the word of that poor peasant girl of fourteen years of age.

She knew that the little shepherd girl of Bartrès was like those most innocent children whose fair heads Jesus loved to caress, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is for such as these." At the word of Bernadette she replies by a solemn engagement:

"And I," said she, "promise you to make you happy, not in this world, but in the next."

To the child who consented to give her a few days, she, in compensation, gave an assurance for eternity.

Bernadette, without losing sight of the apparition, turned to her companions.

She remarked that, while all the time following her with her eyes, the Blessed Virgin rested them for a considerable time, and with tenderness, upon Antoinette Peyret, who was not married, and who made one of the Congregation of the Children of Mary.

She repeated to them what had just passed.

"She is looking at you at this moment," said the girl to Antoinette.

Antoinette was deeply impressed by this remark, and since that time she rejoices in that remembrance.

"Ask her," said they, "if it would annoy her if we, during the fifteen days, were to accompany you here every day."

Bernadette addressed herself to the apparition.

"They can return with you," answered the Holy Virgin, "they and others also. I desire to see people come here."

In saying these words, she disappeared, leaving that radiant brightness with which she was encompassed, and which vanished by degrees.

On this occasion, as on others, the child remarked a detail which seemed, as it were, the law of the aureole with which the Holy Virgin was surrounded.

"When the vision takes place," said she, in her own language, "I behold the light first, and then the Lady; when the vision ceases, it is the Lady who disappears first, and the light afterwards."

XIV.

On her return to Lourdes, Bernadette was obliged to speak to her parents of the promise which she had just made to the mysterious lady, and of the fifteen consecutive days during which she had bound herself to return to the grotto. On their side Antoinette and Madame Millet related what had passed, the marvellous transformation of the child during the ecstasy, the

words of the apparition, the invitation to return for fifteen days. The report of these strange events was propagated immediately on all sides, and being carried abroad very rapidly by the popular feeling, caused, in one way or another, a most profound agitation throughout the country. This Thursday, the 18th February, 1858, was precisely the market day of Lourdes. There was as usual a great number of people, so that, that very evening, the news of the visions, true or false, of Bernadette, spread on the mountains and in the valleys, at Bagnères, at Tarbes, at Cauterets, at Saint-Pè, at Nay, in all directions of the department, and in the nearest towns of the Béarn. The following morning, a hundred persons were already stationed at the grotto at the moment that Bernadette arrived there. The next, there were five hundred. On Sunday morning there were several thousand.

What did they see, however? What did they hear under these wild rocks? Nothing, absolutely nothing, except a poor child at prayer, who said she saw and heard. The more slight the cause in appearance, the more unaccountable, humanly, was the effect.

It must have been, so said believers, either that a reflection from on high was really visible over this child, or that the breath of God, which moves hearts as He pleases, had passed over these multitudes. *Spiritus ubi vult spirat.*

An electric current, an irresistible power from which no one could keep it, seemed to have excited this population at the word of an ignorant shepherdess. In the timber-yards, in the work-

shops, in the interior of families, in societies, among the laity and among the clergy, among the poor and the rich, at the club, in the coffee-houses, in the public-houses, in the squares, in the streets, night and morning, in private and public, nothing was talked of but this. Whether sympathising or hostile, or neither one nor the other, but only curious or anxious about the truth, there was nobody in the country whose mind at this moment was not ardently, I was going to say solely, engrossed with these events.

The popular instinct did not wait till the apparition had told its name, to recognise it. "It is without doubt the Blessed Virgin," said they on all sides amongst the multitude.

Before the authority, so very small in itself, of a little girl of thirteen or fourteen years of age, pretending to see and hear what no one around her could see or hear, the philosophers of the country, fed with the powerful prose of the journals, had a capital opportunity of inveighing against superstition.

"This child is not even of age to take an oath; she would be listened to with difficulty in a court, giving her deposition on an insignificant fact; and we are desired to believe her when it is a question as to an impossible event, an apparition.....Is it not clear that it is a comedy, got up for some money-making, by her family, or by the priest-party? A good pair of eyes are enough to see through this miserable intrigue. The first comer would not require ten minutes to do so."

Some of those who held this language deter-

mined to see Bernadette, interrogate her, and be present at her ecstasies. The answers of the child were simple, natural, without any contradiction, made in an accent of truth which it was impossible to mistake, and which carried into the most prejudiced minds a conviction of her entire sincerity. As to ecstasies, those who have seen at Paris the great actresses of our time, declared that art could not attain to such a perfection. The comedy explanation did not stand more than twenty-four hours before the evidence.

The savants, those who had at first allowed the philosophers to decide the question, next took the high line.

"We are perfectly well acquainted with this state," declared they. "Nothing is more natural. This little girl is sincere, quite sincere, in her replies: she is under a delusion; she thinks she sees, and she does not see; she thinks she hears, and she does not hear. As to her ecstasies, which are equally sincere with her, they are the result neither of comedy nor of art, which would be powerless in producing such effects, but they proceed from medical causes. The daughter of Soubirous is subject to a disease,—it is catalepsy; a derangement of the brain, complicated by a muscular and nervous affection. Such is the entire explanation of the phenomena about which the people make so much noise. Nothing is more simple."

The little weekly journal of the locality, *The Lavedan*, an advanced journal, that appeared habitually late, postponed its publication for

a day or two, in order to speak of this event, and in an article, as hostile as it knew how to make, summed up the high considerations of philosophy and medicine that had been worked up by the freethinkers of the place. From this moment, that is to say, from Friday evening or Saturday, the comedy theme had already been given up in presence of the clearness of the facts, and the freethinking gentlemen no longer returned to it, as can be ascertained through all the journals of that period.

In conformity with the universal tradition of high criticism in matters of religion, the good editor of the *Lavedan* began by calumniating a little, and insinuating that Bernadette and her companions were thieves.

"Three young children went to collect branches from the trees, the remains of a wood-cutting, near the gates of the town. These girls, *seeing themselves surprised by the proprietor*, fled with all their might into the grotto, near the road to the forest of Lourdes."*

It is always in this style that free thought has written history. After this loyal act, which manifested clearly his good will and his admirable sense of justice, the editor of the *Lavedan* gave, without any very gross errors, a description of the facts themselves that happened at the rocks of Massabielle. They were too notorious, and had too many witnesses, to be denied.

* *The Lavedan* of the 18th February, 1858. In spite of the date, this number did not appear really till the evening of the nineteenth or the twentieth, as the facts themselves in the text prove, and further announced an extract from a judgment posterior to the date of the journal.

"We shall not relate," added he, "the thousand versions that have been given of this subject; we shall only say that the young girl goes every morning to pray at the entry of the grotto, having a taper in her hand, escorted by more than five hundred persons. There she is seen to pass from the greatest recollection to a gentle smile, and fall again into a completely extatic state; tears drop from her motionless eyes, that remain continually fixed on that place in the grotto where she thinks she sees the Holy Virgin. We shall keep our readers duly informed of this occurrence, which every day gains fresh adepts."

Of comedy, of jugglery, not a word. It was felt that on this side everything fell to pieces at the first interview with the child, at the first glance given to Bernadette in ecstasy, to her tears, which at times inundated her cheeks. The excellent editor, to succeed better in making it believed that she was ill, affected to pity her. He only spoke of her with a kind of compassion. "Poor visionary." "Everything," said he, "from her first words, causes us to suppose that this young girl is attacked with catalepsy."

"Delusion and catalepsy," were the two great words among the savants at Lourdes. "Rest assured," repeated they, frequently, "that there is nothing supernatural to which science has not done full justice. Science explains everything, science alone is certain. It compares, it judges, it only looks at facts. The supernatural was good during ages in which the world was buried in superstition, in which men knew not how to

observe it; but now we defy it to show itself: we are at this point. See the stupidity of the people! Because a little girl is unwell; because in her state of fever she has her crotchets and fancies, all these weak-minded people cry out, 'A miracle.' Human stupidity must surpass all bounds, to see an apparition in what appears not, and a voice in what nobody hears. Let the pretended apparition stop the sun like Josue, let it strike the rock like Moses, and let it cause the water to spring forth; let it cure the incurable, let it in some manner command nature; then we shall believe. But who does not know that such things never happen, and have never happened?"

Such were, in these and similar terms, the discourses interchanged, from morning till night, among the sagacious intellects that represented medicine and philosophy at Lourdes.

The greater part of these thinkers had seen Bernadette often enough to attest that she was playing no comedy. That sufficed for their spirit of inquiry. From the fact that she was evidently in good faith, they concluded that she must be either weak in mind, or a cataleptic. The possibility of any other explanation was not admitted by their strong minds. When it was proposed to them to study the fact, to see the child again, going or returning from the grotto, to follow in all their details these surprising phenomena, they shrugged their shoulders, laughed philosophically, and said: "We know all that by heart. These crises are common. Before a month this child will be completely mad, and probably paralyzed."

Some, nevertheless, did not reason altogether in the same way.

"Such phenomena are rare," said one of the most distinguished physicians in the town, Dr. Dozous, "and for my part I shall not lose this opportunity to examine them with care. The partisans of the supernatural throw them too often in the face of medicine for me not to be curious; since they are now brought within reach, I will study them attentively, and fathom to the bottom, *de visu* and by experience, this celebrated question."

M. Dufo, the lawyer, and several members of the bar; M. Pouyat, president of the tribunal; and a great number of others, resolved to devote themselves, during the fifteen days already announced, to the most scrupulous inquiries, and to attend as much as possible in the first places. In proportion as the matter assumed more considerable proportions, the number of observers augmented.

Some physicians, some suicidal Socrates, some local philosophers calling themselves Voltairians, to make believe that they had read Voltaire, alone hardened themselves against their own curiosity, and made it a point of honour not to figure in the stupid crowd that every day went on increasing. As it happens almost always, these fanatics of free inquiry made it their rule never to inquire at all. For them no fact was worthy of attention that disturbed the inflexible dogmas which they had learnt in the credo of their journal. From the height of their infallible wisdom, at the door of their shop, in

front of their coffee-house, at the windows of the club, these spirits of the first water beheld with sublime contempt the countless hosts of human beings which some unaccountable vortex was carrying away to the grotto.

The clergy, naturally, were strongly impressed by these facts; but, with tact and good sense, they had assumed, from the commencement, an attitude of the most reserved and prudent kind.

The clergy, surprised, as all the rest of the world, by the remarkable event which had forcibly arrested public attention, took considerable pains to understand its character. Where, in the largeness of its ideas, local Voltairianism could only see one possible solution, the clergy saw several others. The fact might be natural, and in this case, be produced by a very clever comedy, or by some very strange malady; but it might be supernatural, and then the inquiry would be, if this supernatural were diabolic or divine. God has His miracles, and the devil has his marvels. The clergy knew all these things, and resolved to study with extreme care the smallest circumstances of the events then in process of manifestation. They had, moreover, from the first moment, received with great distrust the report of a fact so surprising. Nevertheless, it might be divine, and they did not intend to pronounce upon it hastily.

XV.

The child whose name had suddenly become so celebrated throughout the country, was completely unknown to the priests of the town. Since her return to Lourdes, to be with her parents, she went to the catechism, but the ecclesiastic entrusted this year with the instruction of the children, M. l'Abbé Pomian, had not observed her. He had, however, once or twice asked her a question, but without knowing her name, and without paying any attention to her person, lost as she was in the crowd of children, unknown, also, as those habitually are, who are the last comers. When all the populations were now flocking to the grotto, towards the third of the fifteen days required by the mysterious apparition, the Abbé Pomian, desiring to know this extraordinary child, of whom everybody was speaking, called her by her name at the catechism, as he had the custom of doing, whenever he wished to interrogate anyone. At the name of Bernadette Soubirous, a little girl, delicate looking and poorly clad, humbly got up. The ecclesiastic did not remark in her anything but her simplicity, and likewise her extreme ignorance on all religious matters.

The parish had at its head at this moment a priest whose character it is important to describe.

M. l'Abbé Peyramale, who was about fifty years of age at that time, had been for two years the *Curé-Doyen* of the town and canton of

Lourdes. He was a man naturally rough, impetuous perhaps in his love of good, but softened by grace, in whom could be perceived at times the primitive tree, the rugged but solidly good stock, on which the delicate and powerful hand of God had ingrafted the Christian and the priest. This innate impulsiveness, entirely subdued as to what concerned himself, had become pure zeal for the house of God.

In the pulpit, his language, always apostolic, was sometimes harsh; he inveighed against everything that was evil, and any abuse, any moral disorder, from whatever quarter it came, did not find him indifferent or weak. Often the society of the town, scourged in some one of its vices or irregularities by the earnest discourses of its pastor, had raised a loud cry. He had not been dismayed, and had finished by always being, by the help of God, victorious in the combat.

These men of duty are troublesome; and worldlings rarely forgive the independence and sincerity of their language. Nevertheless they pardoned him; for when they saw him walk through the town with his cassock darned and patched, his thick shoes mended, and his old mis-shapen three-cornered hat, they knew that the money for his wardrobe had been employed in succouring the unfortunate. This priest, so austere in his manners, so severe in his doctrines, had an inexpressibly kind heart, and spent his patrimony in doing good, as unostentatiously as he was able. But his humility could not succeed in hiding, as he would have wished, his life of devotedness. The gratitude of the poor had

spoken ; a private life is, besides, very quickly seen through in small towns, and he had become the object of general veneration. One had only to behold the fashion with which his parishioners took off their hats when he passed in the street. One had only to witness the familiar, affectionate, and pleasing manner with which the poor people, seated on the step of their door, saluted him, "Good day, Monsieur le Curé," and it could be guessed that a sacred bond,—that of good well performed,—united the shepherd to his sheep. The freethinkers said of him : "He is not always convenient ; but he is charitable, and does not care for money. He is the best of men, notwithstanding his cassock."

Full of disinterestedness and kindness of heart in private life, never, therefore, suspecting evil, and letting himself even sometimes be deceived by people who took advantage of his generosity, he was, as a priest, prudent even to mistrust, in everything that belonged to the functions of his ministry, and to the eternal interests of religion. The man might sometimes be taken in, the priest never. There are graces belonging to a state of life.

This eminent priest united to a heart of an apostle, good sense, together with rare firmness, and a character which nothing in the world could shake when the truth was in question. Events were not long before they brought to light these first-rate qualities. In placing him at Lourdes at this epoch, Providence had had His designs.

Controlling in this his impatient nature, M. l'Abbé Peyramale, before permitting his clergy

to take any step and show themselves at the grotto, before he permitted himself to go thither, resolved to wait till events had assumed a character clearly determined, till the proofs had exhibited themselves in one sense or other, and till ecclesiastical authority had pronounced.

XVI.

The most intelligent of the little legion of functionaries at Lourdes at this period was certainly Monsieur Jacomet, though M. Jacomet was hierarchically the lowest of all, since he only filled the humble employment of commissary of police. He was young, very shrewd under certain circumstances, and gifted with an ability of speech very seldom found among his compeers. Nobody understood rogues better than he. He was wonderfully apt in detecting their tricks, and on this point astonishing anecdotes were related of him. He understood upright people much less. At his ease in complicated affairs, this man was upset when he had to do with simplicity. The truth disconcerted him, and seemed to him suspicious; disinterestedness excited his mistrust; frankness put his cleverness on the rack, eager to discover everywhere duplicity and subterfuge. On account of this monomania, sanctity would have appeared to him without doubt the most monstrous of impostures, and found him implacable. Such crotchets are often met with among men in that profession, addicted by their employment ever

to find out guilt and circumvent crime. Such men acquire at length a disposition of mind eminently restless and suspicious, which inspires them with marks of genius when they have to deal with rogues, and enormous foolishness when they have to deal with upright people and with candid minds. Though young, M. Jacomet had contracted this fantastic malady of old agents of police. Thus he was like those horses of the Pyrenees, whose feet are firm on the crooked and stony paths of the mountain, and who fall down at every two hundred steps they take on broad and level roads; or those night birds which only see in darkness, and in full day knock against trees and walls.

Satisfied with himself, he was discontented with his position, to which, by his intelligence, he was superior. Hence a certain restless pride, and an ardent desire to distinguish himself. He had more than influence, he had an ascendancy over his chiefs, and affected to be on equal terms with the procureur imperial and all the other functionaries; he meddled with everything, domineered over almost everybody, and managed almost entirely, it may be said, the affairs of the town. For all that concerned the canton of Lourdes, the prefect of the department, M. the Baron Massy, saw only through the eyes of Jacomet.

Such was the commissary of police, the important personage of Lourdes, when the apparitions at the grotto of Massabielle took place.

XVII.

It was the third day of the fifteen, the 21st of February, the first Sunday of Lent.

Before sunrise, an immense crowd, several thousand persons, had already assembled before and all round the grotto, on the banks of the Gave and in the meadow. It was the time that Bernadette usually came. She arrived, wrapped in her white capulet, followed by one of her own family, her mother or sister. Her parents had been present on the eve, and before the eve, at her ecstasies; they had seen her transformed, and now they believed.

The child traversed quite simply, without assurance or embarrassment, the crowd which made way respectfully before her to let her pass through, and without appearing to notice the universal attention, she went, as if accomplishing an ordinary thing, to kneel and pray underneath the niche, round which wound the branch of sweet briar.

A few instants after, her face was seen to brighten and become radiant. The blood, however, did not mount to her face; on the contrary, she became slightly pale, as if nature bent somewhat in presence of the apparition that manifested itself before her. All her features, becoming more and more elevated, seemed to enter, as it were, into a superior region, a place of glory, expressing sentiments and things that belong not to here below. The mouth, a little

open, was admirably beautiful, and seemed to breathe of heaven. The eyes, fixed and happy, contemplated an invisible beauty, which no other gaze perceived, but which all felt was present, which all, so to speak, beheld by reflection on the countenance of the child. This poor little peasant girl appeared no longer to belong to the land of exile.

She was an angel of innocence, leaving the world for a little space behind her, and falling down in adoration at the moment when the eternal gates were opening, from whence she was beholding Paradise.

All who have seen Bernadette in an ecstasy speak of this spectacle as being altogether without analogy on earth. Their impression after ten years is as lively as on the first day.

Although her attention was entirely absorbed by the contemplation of the holy Virgin full of grace, she was also partly conscious of what was passing about her.

Thus, when a gust of wind extinguished her taper, she stretched out her hand in order that the nearest person might light it again.

Some one having wished to touch the sweet briar with a stick, she quickly made a sign to let it alone, and her face showed signs of fear. "I was afraid," said she, simply, "that they might touch the lady, and do her some harm."

One of the observers, whose name we have mentioned, Doctor Dozous, was at her side.

"This," he thought, "is neither catalepsy, with its stiffness of position, nor the unconscious ecstasy of those labouring under hallucination;

it is an extraordinary fact, of an order altogether unknown to medicine."

He took the arm of the child, and felt her pulse. She seemed to pay no attention to it. The pulse, perfectly calm, was as regular as in its ordinary state.

"There is, then, no unhealthy excitement," said the learned doctor to himself, more and more embarrassed.

At this moment Bernadette went forward some paces on her knees into the grotto. The apparition had changed its place, and it was now through the interior opening that she could perceive it.

The look of the holy Virgin appeared in an instant to travel over the whole earth, and she brought it back, full of sorrow, towards Bernadette, who was on her knees.

"What is the matter? What must I do?" said the child.

"Pray for sinners," replied the Mother of the human race.

On beholding sorrow thus veiling, like a cloud, the everlasting serenity of the Blessed Virgin, the heart of the poor shepherdess all at once experienced a cruel suffering. An unutterable sadness spread itself over her features. From her eyes, continually quite open and fixed on the apparition, two tears rolled down her cheeks, and stopped there without falling.

A ray of joy returned again to light up her countenance; for the holy Virgin had, without doubt, turned her own gaze towards hope, and contemplated, in the Heart of the Father, the

inexhaustible source of infinite mercy descending upon the world, in the name of Jesus, and by the hands of the Church.

It was at that instant that the apparition vanished. The Queen of Heaven re-entered her kingdom.

The aureole, as usual, continued still a few seconds, then insensibly faded away, like a luminous mist which melts away and disappears in the atmosphere.

The features of Bernadette by degrees returned to their wonted expression. It seemed as if she passed from the region of the sun to that of the shade, and the commonness of earth retook possession of that countenance which an instant before was transformed.

Around her pressed the breathless crowd,—anxious, impressed, and recollect ed. We shall have occasion elsewhere to describe their attitude.

XVIII.

During all the forenoon, after Mass, and until the hour for Vespers, nothing was talked of at Lourdes but these strange events, to which various interpretations were assigned. For those who had seen Bernadette in an ecstasy, a proof was given in a manner which they declared to be irresistible. Some described their thoughts by somewhat happy comparisons. "In our valleys the sun shows himself late, hidden as he is on the east by the peak and the mountain of the Ger. But long before perceiving him, we

can remark to the west the reflection of his rays on the slopes of the mountains of Bastsurguères, which become resplendent while we are in the shade, and then, although we do not see the sun directly, we affirm his presence behind the enormous masses of the Ger. Bastsurguères sees the sun, we say ; and if we were at the top of Bastsurguères, we should see him also. Well, then, it is the same when we cast our eyes on Bernadette illumined by the invisible apparition ; the certainty is the same, the evidence alike. The countenance of the child who sees the apparition appears all at once so bright, so transfigured, so shining, so impregnated with divine rays, that this marvellous reflection which we behold gives us a full assurance of the luminous centre that we see not. And if we had not, to hide it from us, a whole mountain of faults, miseries, material distractions, and sensual darkness, if we were at the height of this child's innocence, that eternal snow which no human foot has trodden, we too should see, no longer by reflection, but directly, what Bernadette in her rapture beholds, and which sheds its rays over her extatic features."

Such reasons, excellent perhaps in themselves, and conclusive for those who had been witnesses of this unheard-of spectacle, could not be enough for those who had seen nothing. Providence, supposing it was really concerned in this affair, should, it seemed, confirm its action by proofs, if not better, (since no one could resist these when able to test them by experiment,) at least more material, more sustained, and in some

manner more palpable. Perhaps this was the profound design of God, and He did not convoke together such multitudes but to have, at the hour He willed, innumerable and irresistible witnesses.

At the end of Vespers, Bernadette came out of the church along with a large body of the faithful. She was, as may be imagined, the object of general attention. The poor child, embarrassed by such a concourse, replied to them in a simple manner, and tried to get through the crowd, in order to return home.

At this moment, a man invested with the insignia of the public force, a sergent de ville, an officer of police, approached, and touched her on the shoulder.

"In the name of the law," said he.

"What do you want with me?" said the child.

"I have an order to arrest you, and take you off."

"And where?"

"To the commissary of police. Follow me."

XIX.

A threatening murmur ran through the crowd. Many of those present had seen in the morning the humble child transfigured by a divine ecstasy, illuminated by rays from on high. In their eyes this little blessed child of God had about her something sacred. So, when they saw the agent of the public force lay his hand upon her, they trembled with indignation, and wished

to interfere. But a priest, who came out of the church at that moment, made a sign to the crowd to be calm. "Let authority act," said he.

By a marvellous coincidence, such as we often meet with in the history of supernatural events, when we give ourselves the trouble or rather the joy of searching into them, the universal Church had chanted on that day, the first Sunday of Lent, the immortal words destined to console and comfort the innocent and the weak in the midst of persecutions: "God has given His angels charge over thee, that they may guard thee in thy ways. They will bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. Hope in Him, He will protect thee under the shadow of His wings....His almighty power will encompass thee as with an invincible buckler.....Go in all confidence. Thou shalt crush under thy feet the asp and the serpent; the lion and the dragon shall be overpowered by thee.....Because he hath hoped in Me, saith the Lord, I will deliver him. I will protect him, because he hath confessed My name. He shall call upon Me, and I will hear him. *I will be with him in his tribulation.*"

The Gospel of the day related how the Saviour of men, the eternal type of the just on earth, had, at the beginning of His divine mission, to undergo temptation; and it gave all the details of His illustrious contest, and His victory over the evil spirit in the solitude of the desert. *Ductus est Jesus in desertum, ut tentaretur a diabolo.....*

Such were the texts, so consoling for innocent

and persecuted weakness, which the Church had caused to be heard; such were the great records which she had evoked, and the memory of which she had celebrated, on this day, when, in the heart of an obscure mountain town, an agent of the public force came to seize, in the name of the law, a little ignorant child, and conduct her before the most skilful and crafty of the representatives of authority.

The multitude, affected and agitated, had followed Bernadette, when led away by the official agent. The police station was not far off. The sergeant entered with the child, and leaving her alone in the corridor, came back to close the door with lock and bolt.

A moment after, Bernadette found herself in the presence of M. Jacomet.

XX.

The intelligent individual who was about to examine Bernadette felt himself assured of an easy triumph, and was, beforehand, highly delighted.

He was one of those who reject with obstinacy the explanations of the learned men of a country. He neither believed in catalepsy, nor in hallucination, nor in the different illusions of a morbid ecstasy. The precision of the statements which were attributed to the child, the remarks made by Doctor Dozous and several other witnesses of the scenes at the grotto, seemed to him to be irreconcilable with such an hypothesis. As to

the fact of the apparitions, he did not believe in the possibility of ultramundane visions, and his detective genius, very clever in spying out rogues under an illegal act, could not perhaps go so far as to discover God beneath a supernatural fact. Thus, convinced in himself that there could not be any but pretended apparitions, he had resolved to find out, by craft or by force, the root of the error, and so render to the free-thinkers, in power or elsewhere, the signal service of detecting a supernatural manifestation, a popular belief, in the very act of imposture. He had here an admirable occasion for striking a rude blow at the pretended authority of all visions in the past, above all, if he could succeed in discovering and showing that the clergy, who were holding back so carefully in this affair, directed or secretly promoted it.

If we are to suppose that God went for nothing in this event, and that men were all in all in it, the reasoning of Jacomet was excellent.

But, in the contrary supposition that God was all in all in it, and men nothing, the unfortunate commissary of police was then taking a most fatal step.

In these dispositions of mind, M. Jacomet had, from the first days, carefully caused all the proceedings of Bernadette to be watched, in order to see if he could not pounce upon some mysterious communication between the child who saw the apparition and such-and-such a member of the clergy, whether at Lourdes or in the environs. He had even carried his zeal for his functions to such an extent as to place in

the church one of his own creatures to have an eye on the confessional. But the children for catechism went to confession in their turns every fifteen days or month, and the turn for Bernadette had not, during these days, come round. All these conscientious efforts had not brought with them a discovery of any complicity in the acts of knavery attributed to Bernadette. He concluded from them that she acted probably alone, without however giving up altogether his suspicions, for a true police officer always suspects, even without proofs. It is this that constitutes their particular type and their peculiar genius.

When Bernadette entered, he set upon her his sharp and penetrating eyes, which he had the marvellous art of impregnating with an air of kindness and ease. He, who habitually carried a high tone with all the world, showed himself excessively polite to the poor daughter of the miller Soubirous; he was mild and insinuating. He made her sit down, and adopted, to interrogate her, the benevolent manner of a true friend.

"It appears that you see a beautiful lady at the grotto of Massabielle; my good little child, tell me all about it."

Just as he had said these words, the door of the room was softly opened, and some one entered. It was M. Estrade, the receiver of indirect taxes, one of the most important men at Lourdes, and one of the most intelligent. This functionary occupied a portion of the house where M. Jacomet resided; and becoming aware,

by the rumour of the crowd, of the arrival of Bernadette at the office of the commissary, he had had the very natural curiosity to assist at the examination. He shared, besides, on the subject of apparitions, the ideas of Jacomet, and believed, like him, that it was a piece of knavery on the part of the child. He shrugged his shoulders when any other explanation was offered him. He judged these things to be so absurd, that he had not even condescended to go to the grotto and see the strange things which were related about it. This philosopher sat down a little apart, after having made a sign not to interrupt the proceeding. All this occurred without Bernadette seeming to pay it any great attention.

The scene and the dialogue of the two speakers thus obtained a witness.

In answer to the question of Monsieur Jacomet, the child cast on the police officer her beautiful innocent look, and proceeded to state, in her own language, that is, in the patois of the country, and with a degree of personal timidity which was some addition to her accent of truth, the extraordinary events in which she had been engaged for several days.

M. Jacomet listened to her with lively attention, continuing to affect a perfect ease and kindness of manner. From time to time he set down some notes on a paper he had before him.

The child remarked it, but with perfect indifference.

When she had finished her statement, the commissary, more and more fair-spoken and

assiduous, put no end of questions, as if his enthusiastic piety was interested beyond measure in such divine marvels. He drew up all his interrogatories one after another, without any order, in short and rapid phrases, in order not to give to the child time to reflect.

To these different questions Bernadette answered without any difficulty, without a shadow of hesitation, with the tranquil assurance of some one who may be interrogated respecting the aspect of a country or a picture which is under their eyes. Sometimes, in order to make herself better understood, she added some imitative gesture, or mimic expression, as it were to supply the deficiency of her words.

The rapid pen of M. Jacomet had noted down, however, in regular order, all the answers given him.

It was then, having in a manner endeavoured to fatigue and bewilder the mind of the child in the infinite minutiae of the details, it was then that the formidable agent of police adopted, with sudden transition, a threatening and terrible physiognomy and language.

"Thou art a liar," exclaimed he, violently, and as if seized with a sudden fit of anger. "Thou art deceiving the whole world, and if thou dost not confess to me at once the truth, I will have thee taken up by the gendarmes."

Poor Bernadette was as much amazed at the sight of this sudden and terrible metamorphosis, as if, thinking she held in her hands an inoffensive branch of a tree, she felt all at once twisting between her fingers the icy rings of a

serpent. She was astonished, but, contrary to the profound calculations of Jacomet, she was not disturbed. She continued calm, as if an invisible hand had sustained her soul before this unforeseen shock.

The commissary stood up and looked at the door, as if to say that he had only to make a sign to call the gendarmes and send the visionary to prison.

"Monsieur," said Bernadette, with a peaceful and gentle firmness, which, in this poor little peasant girl had an incomparable and simple greatness; "Monsieur, you may give me up to the gendarmes, but I cannot say anything else but what I have said. It is the truth."

"That is what we are going to see," said the commissary, sitting down, and judging by a glance of his practised eye that the threat was absolutely powerless over that extraordinary child.

M. Estrade, who was a mute and impartial witness of the scene, was divided between the prodigious astonishment with which Bernadette's tone of conviction inspired him, and the admiration with which he was struck, in spite of himself, at the skilful strategy of Jacomet, the whole bearing of which he understood, in proportion as it displayed itself before him.

The contest assumed a character altogether unexpected between this double force of finesse, and infantine weakness without any other protection than its simplicity.

Jacomet, notwithstanding, armed with the notes which he had just been putting down for

three quarters of an hour, set about to begin again his examination, but in quite another order, and with a thousand captious forms, always proceeding, according to his method, by harsh and hasty questions, and requiring immediate answers. He doubted not but that he should be able, at least in some points of detail, to entangle the little girl in a contradiction of herself. That being done, the imposture would be demonstrated, and he, master of the situation. But he exhausted in vain all the dexterity of his mind in framing a maze of questions for that subtle manœuvre. The child did not contradict herself in anything, not even in that imperceptible point, in that very small iota, of which the Gospel speaks. To the same questions, whatever were the terms in which they were put, she always replied, if not in the same words, at least by stating the same things, and in the same colour. M. Jacomet, however, was obstinate, and was only for fatiguing more and more the intelligence which he wished to find at fault. He turned over and over again in every sense the narrative of the apparitions, without being able to touch it. He was like an animal trying to bite a diamond.

"Very well," said he to Bernadette, "I am going to draw an official report, and I will read it for you."

He wrote rapidly two or three pages on consulting his notes. He had purposely introduced into certain details some variations of little importance, as for example, the form of the dress, the length or the position of the veil of

the holy Virgin. It was a fresh snare. It was as useless as all the others. While he read and spoke from time to time, "It is so-and-so, is it not?" Bernadette replied humbly, but with a firmness as simple and gentle as it was unshaken: "No, I did not say so, but this,—she did this."

And she restored the inaccurate detail to its primitive truth and colour. The greater part of the time Jacomet disputed with her.

"But you have said this. I even wrote it down at the moment. You have said so-and-so, in this manner, to several persons in the town," &c.

Bernadette answered: "I have not said so; I could not do so, because it is not the truth."

Strange, the modest and invincible self-possession of this child! M. Estrade observed her with increased astonishment. Personally, Bernadette was and appeared to be extremely timid; her attitude was humble, even a little confused before every one she did not know; and yet, upon everything that related to the reality of the apparition, she showed a force of soul and an energy of persistence quite uncommon.

When it was a question of bearing witness to what she had seen, she replied without emotion, and with an imperturbable equanimity. Still, it was easy then to discern the virginal purity of a soul which would have preferred to hide itself from the look of all. It could be manifestly seen that it was only out of respect for the interior truth of which she was the messenger among men, through love for "the Lady who

appeared at the grotto," that she triumphed over her habitual timidity. It required nothing less than the feeling of her duty to surmount in her the intimate bent of her natural character, which was timorous in all other things, and an enemy to noise and display.

The commissary began again to threaten her. "If you continue to go to the grotto, I will have you put in prison; and you shall not go away from here except you promise me that you will not return there any more."

"I have promised the vision to go there," said the child; "and then, when the moment arrives, I am impelled by something that comes on me and calls me."

The examination, it could be seen, was approaching an end. It had lasted a long time,—not less than a good hour. Outside, the multitude waited, not without some restless impatience, the exit of the child whom they had seen that same morning transfigured in the light of a divine ecstasy. From the room where the scene was passing, which we have just described, were confusedly heard the shouts, discourses, questionings, and a thousand different noises, which constitute the tumult of a crowd. The murmurs seemed to increase and become menacing. At a certain moment, there was a particular movement in the crowd, as if in the midst of it there had arrived a new comer, who was strongly expected and desired.

Almost immediately repeated knocks resounded at the door of the house.

The commissary appeared to be unmoved by them.

The knocking became more violent. He who rapped shook the door, at the same time endeavouring to break it open. Jacomet, growing angry, got up and went to open it himself.

"No one enters here," said he, in a passion.
"What do you want?"

"I want my daughter," replied the miller Soubirous, forcing himself in, and following the commissary into the apartment where Bernadette was.

The sight of the peaceful countenance of his daughter calmed the anxious agitation of her father, and he was no longer anything but a poor man, somewhat trembling before the personage who, in spite of his inferior position, was, through his activity and intelligence, the most important and the most dreaded in that little county.

Francis Soubirous had taken off his Bearnese cap, and was moving it about in his hands. Jacomet, whom nothing escaped, saw through the fear of the miller.

He resumed his air of easy politeness and condescension. He tapped him familiarly on the shoulder.

"Father Soubirous," said he to him, "take care, take care, take care! Your daughter is about to compromise herself seriously, she is going straight on the road that will carry her to prison. I will not, however, send her there this time, but upon the condition that you forbid her returning to that grotto, where she is play-

ing a comedy. At the very next offence I shall be inflexible; and besides, you know that Mons. the Procureur Imperial does not trifle with any one."

"Since you desire it, M. Jacomet," replied the poor affrighted father, "I will forbid her doing so, and her mother also; and as she has always obeyed us, she certainly will not go."

"At all events, if she goes there, if this scandal continues, I will not only make her answer for it, but you," said the terrible commissary again, in a threatening attitude, and making them a sign to go away.

Immediately Bernadette and her father came out, the crowd uttered shouts of satisfaction. Then, the child returning home, the multitude dispersed.

The commissary of police and the tax-gatherer, remaining alone, exchanged their impressions of this strange examination.

"What unshaken firmness in her depositions!" exclaimed M. Estrade, struck with profound astonishment.

"What an invincible obstinacy in her lies!" replied Jacomet, amazed that he had been conquered.

"What an appearance of truth!" continued the receiver. "Nothing in her language or manner that once belied itself. It is evident that she believed that she saw."

"What subtlety of intelligence!" replied the commissary. "She never contradicted herself in spite of all my efforts. She has her fabulous history at her fingers' ends."

The commissary and M. Estrade, however, both continued in their incredulity relative to the fact itself of the apparition. But a shade already separated their two denials, and that shade was an abyss. One supposed Bernadette crafty in her lie, the other judged her full of good faith, but under an illusion.

"She is clever," said the first.

The second said, "She is sincere."

XXI.

Although he had been powerless against the answers, simple, precise, and uncontradictory, of Bernadette, M. Jacomet had gained, at the end of this long contest, a decisive advantage. He had greatly frightened the father of the girl who saw the vision, and felt that in this quarter, for the moment, at least, he was master of the position.

Francis Soubirous was a very worthy man, but he was not a hero. Before official authority he was timid, as the lower orders and the poorer people usually are, for whom the smallest mischief is an immense disaster, on account of their indigence, and who feel all their powerlessness in presence of what is arbitrary or an act of persecution. He believed, it is true, in the reality of the apparition, but not understanding what it was, nor appreciating its importance, experiencing even a certain terror on the subject of these extraordinary events, he saw no great harm in opposing the return of Bernadette to

the grotto. He had, perhaps, a vague fear of displeasing the invisible Lady who manifested herself to his child ; but the dread of irritating a man of flesh and blood, of engaging in a contest with so formidable a personage as the commissary, came the nearest home to him, and acted more powerfully on his mind.

" You see that all the gentlemen of the country are against you," said he to Bernadette, " and that if you return to the grotto, M. Jacomet, who can do everything, will put you and me in prison. Do not go back there any more."

" Father," said Bernadette, " when I go there it is not altogether of myself. At a certain moment there is something in me which calls me, and which draws me there."

" Whatever it be," replied the father, " I formally forbid you to go there for the future. You would not disobey me certainly for the first time in your life."

The poor child, embarrassed thus between her promise made to the apparition, and the express prohibition of paternal authority, replied : " I will do then all I possibly can to hinder myself from going there, and resist the attraction which draws me."

Thus sorrowfully was passed the evening of this same Sunday, which had risen in the glorious and happy splendour of her ecstasy.

XXII.

The following morning, the 22nd February, at the usual hour for the apparitions, the crowd on the banks of the Gave in vain awaited the coming of Bernadette. Her parents had at sunrise sent her to school, and the child, always obedient, had gone there, her heart overflowing with tears.

The Sisters, whose duties of charity and instruction, and perhaps also the recommendation of the Curé of Lourdes, had kept them at the hospital or school, had never seen the ecstasies of Bernadette, and had no faith in the apparitions. Upon these matters, besides, if the people show themselves sometimes to be over credulous, it happens that, by a phenomenon which surprises at first, but which is incontestable, ecclesiastics and religious of both sexes are very sceptical and hard of belief; and that, while quite admitting in theory the possibility of such divine manifestations, they exact, with a severity often excessive, that they should be proved ten times over. The Sisters joined, then, their formal prohibition to that of her parents, saying to Bernadette that all these visions had nothing real in them; that they were illusions, or that she had told an untruth. One of them, suspecting imposture in a matter so grave and sacred, assumed a very harsh manner towards her, treating all these matters as nothing but trickery and knavery.

"Good-for-nothing girl," she said, "you are playing there a shameful carnival during the holy time of Lent."

Other persons, who saw her during recreation, accused her of trying to pass for a saint, and amuse herself with a sacrilegious jest. The mockery, of course, of the children in the school was added to the bitter reproaches and humiliations of which she had to drink.

It was the will of God to try Bernadette. Having, on the previous days, inundated her with consolations, He intended, in His wisdom, to leave her for a certain time in absolute abandonment, exposed to railleries and insults, to be left, alone and unaided, to the hostility of all those by whom she was surrounded.

The unhappy little girl suffered cruelly, not only from exterior contradictions, but much more from interior anguish in her soul.

This youthful shepherdess, who had never known before, during her short life, any other but physical pains, was entering on a higher path, and began to feel other tortures and lacerations. On the one hand, she did not wish to disobey either the authority of her father, or of the religious; and on the other, she could not endure the thought of failing in the promise which she had made to the divine apparition at the grotto. In this young soul, hitherto so peaceful, a cruel contest had sprung up. It seemed to her that she was invincibly oscillating between two equally fatal abysses. To go to the grotto was to commit a sin against her father; not to go there was to commit a sin

against the vision that had come from above. It both cases it was, in her eyes, evidently a sin against God. And yet, by the force of events, it was absolutely necessary to do one or the other ; there was no alternative, and it was impossible to avoid making this fatal choice. It is true that what is impossible for man, is possible for God.

The morning was passed in this distress, so much the more painful and cutting to an untried soul, and at that age at which impressions are so lively, and when a habit of human suffering has not yet formed, as it were, a callousness around the delicate fibres of the heart.

Towards midday the children returned, for a short time, to their homes, to take their meals.

Bernadette, with a heart broken between the two irreconcileable issues of her position, from which there was no escape, walked sorrowfully towards her home. The church at Lourdes had just rung the midday Angelus.

At this moment a strange power suddenly seized hold of her, acting, not on her mind, but on her body, as if it had put an invisible arm upon her, and impelled her out of the path she was following, to lead her irresistibly into the path by the fort. This impulse was for her, it seemed, what a mighty blast of wind would be for a leaf lying on the ground. She could no more hinder herself from going than if she had been suddenly placed on the top of one of the steepest declivities. All her physical being felt itself powerfully drawn towards the grotto, to

which this road led. She must go, she must run to it.

And, nevertheless, the movement which took possession of her was neither rough nor violent. It was irresistible, but had nothing in it to hurt or pain her; quite the contrary, it was a supreme power with supreme gentleness. The all-powerful hand showed itself maternal and gentle, as if it feared to do any injury to that weak child.

Providence, which governs all things, then resolved an insoluble problem. The child, in submission to her father, was not going to the grotto, whither her heart alone bounded; and behold, hurried along by the angel of the Lord, she arrives there notwithstanding, according to her promise to the holy Virgin, without her will having disobeyed paternal authority.

Such phenomena have been more than once accomplished in the life of certain souls, whose profound purity has pleased the Heart of God. St. Philip Neri, Saint Ida of Louvain, Saint Joseph of Cupertino, Saint Rosa of Lima, have experienced similar or analogous things.

That humble heart, wounded and desolate, now brightened up with hope in proportion as it approached the grotto.

"There," said the child to herself, "I shall see again the beloved apparition; there I shall be consoled for everything; there I shall contemplate that countenance so beautiful, the sight of which ravished me with joy. To these cruel pains is succeeding a joy without bounds, for the Lady herself will not abandon me."

She knew not, in her inexperience, that the Spirit of God breathes where He wills.

XXIII.

A little before her arrival at the grotto, the mysterious power which had seized the child appeared, if not to cease, at least to diminish.

Bernadette walked less rapidly, and with a fatigue to which she was not habituated; for it was exactly at that spot that, on other days, an invisible power seemed both to draw her to the grotto, and support her while she was going. She experienced, on this day, neither the secret attraction, nor the mysterious support. She had been *pressed* towards the grotto, she had not been *drawn* there. The power which had seized her had marked out the path of duty, and showed that before all things she must obey, and keep her promise to the apparition; but the child had not, as at other times, heard the interior voice, and felt the all-powerful attraction. Whoever has the experience of analyzing such things, will feel the truth of these distinctions more easy to comprehend than to express.

Although a very great multitude, which, during all the morning had so vainly expected Bernadette, had dispersed, yet there was at this moment before the Rocks of Massabielle a considerable crowd. Some had come to pray there, others through simple curiosity. Many, having seen Bernadette afar off walking in that

direction, had hastened thither, and arrived at the same time with her.

The child, as usual, went humbly on her knees, and began to say her rosary, while beholding the opening which was tapestried with moss and wild branches, in which the heavenly vision had already six times deigned to appear to her eyes.

The crowd was attentive, curious, recollected, breathless, awaiting at every moment to behold the countenance of the child radiate, and mark by its splendour that the superhuman being was standing before her.

A very long time was passed in this manner.

Bernadette prayed with fervour, but no divine reflection was lit up in her immovable features. The marvellous vision was not exhibited to her sight, and the child implored the realization of her hopes without being heard. Heaven seemed to abandon her as well as earth, and to remain as deaf to her prayers and her tears as the marble rocks before which her knees were bent.

Of all the trials to which she had been subjected since the day before, this one was the most cruel, and it was the extremity of bitterness to her.

"Why have you disappeared?" thought the child, "and why do you forsake me?"

The marvellous being herself seemed in fact to cast her off, and by ceasing to manifest herself, to give reason to those who contradicted the truth of her apparitions, and leave the field free to her enemies.

The disconcerted crowd interrogated Bernadette. A thousand questions were put to her by those who surrounded her.

"To-day," answered the child, with her eyes red with tears, "the Lady has not appeared to me. I have seen nothing."

"You should now comprehend, my poor little girl, that it was an illusion, and that there never was anything in it; it was all your fancy," said some.

"In fact," added others, "why, if the Lady appeared yesterday, could she not appear to-day?"

"On other days I saw her as I see you," said the child; "and we spoke to each other, she and I. But to-day she is not there, and I do not know why."

"Bah," replied a sceptic, "the commissary of police has done his work, and you will see that all is over. By the king's command,

'On th' part of th' king, 'It is forbid to God
To work a miracle in this abode.'

The believers who were there were grieved at heart, and knew not what to say.

As to Bernadette, sure in herself, and sure as to the past, a doubt never for a moment crossed her mind. But she was in profound grief, and as she returned home she shed bitter tears.

She attributed the absence of the apparition to some dissatisfaction. "Have I committed some fault?" she asked herself. But her conscience did not reply by any reproach. Her ardent longing for the divine vision, which she burned to contemplate, still redoubled, not-

withstanding. She sought in her simple soul what she should do to see it again, and she did not know how to act. She felt herself powerless to evoke that spotless beauty which had appeared to her, and she wept, with her heart lifted above, knowing that to weep is to pray.

In the inmost depth of her soul a secret hope always remained, and some rays of joy, piercing here and there those dark clouds, passed at times over her heart, and fortified her faith in the divine apparition, which she always loved, and in which she believed, though she no longer saw it. And yet without doubt the poor ignorant child knew not, and could not know, the sense of the words which were chanted at that hour in the Epistle for the Mass: "In which you shall greatly rejoice, if now you must for a little time be made sorrowful in divers temptations: that the trial of your faith, (much more precious than gold which is tried by the fire,) may be found unto praise, and glory, and honour, at the appearing of Jesus Christ; *Whom, having not seen, you love; in Whom also now, though you see Him not, you believe; and believing, shall rejoice with an unspeakable and glorified joy.*"*

Neither had she any presentiment of the event which was on the eve of being accomplished, and this humble peasant girl could not know, nor apply to the Rock of Massabielle those words which the priests of the whole universe pronounced on this same day at the Gospel of

* I. Peter, i. 6-9, and used in the Mass of 22nd February.

the Mass: "*Super hanc petram ædificabo Ecclesiam meam,*"—"Upon this rock I will build My Church." She did not foresee that soon, that is to say, the following day after these hours full of tears, she would herself announce prophetically, and demand, in the name of the apparition, the erection of a church on these desert rocks.

All these things were hidden in the unfathomable obscurity of the future.

"Where have you been?" said her father, the moment she came back.

She related what had just passed.

"And you say," replied her parents, "that a power carried you in spite of yourself?"

"Yes," answered Bernadette.

"This is true," thought they, "for this child has never told a lie."

The father Soubirous reflected a good deal. He seemed to have some inward conflict with himself. At last he lifted up his head, and appeared to come to a final decision.

"Well," said he, "since it is so, since a superior power has drawn you with it, I no longer forbid you to go to the grotto, and I leave you free."

Joy, a pure and lively joy, descended upon the countenance of Bernadette. Neither the miller nor his wife had offered as an objection the non-appearance of the apparition that day. Perhaps, in the intimate recesses of their heart,

they saw the cause of it, in the resistance which, through dread of official authority, they had made to orders that were supernatural.

XXIV.

What we have just described took place after midday, and the report of it was quickly spread throughout the town. The abrupt cessation of supernatural apparitions gave room to the most opposite comments. Some pretended to make an argument from them that was unanswerable against all preceding visions; others, on the contrary, drew from them a proof still more in favour of the sincerity of the child.

That irresistible power which had carried away Bernadette in spite of herself, made the philosophic shoulders of the locality shrug themselves, and furnished a subject of endless propositions for distinguished savants, who explained it all by means of a certain disturbance of the nervous system.

The commissary, seeing that his injunctions had been violated, and learning, besides, that Francis Soubirous had withdrawn the prohibition he had given his daughter, sent for them both to come before him, as well as the mother, and renewed his threats. He used new means to intimidate them; but, notwithstanding the terror which he occasioned them, he no longer found, to his great surprise, in Francis Soubirous the docility or the pusillanimity he had seen the day before.

"Monsieur Jacomet," said the poor man, "Bernadette has never told me a lie, and if the good God, the holy Virgin, or some saint, calls her, we cannot oppose it. Put yourself in our place, Monsieur the Commissary: the good God would punish us."

"Besides, you say yourself that the vision has no longer taken place," argued Jacomet, addressing himself to the child. "You have nothing more to do there."

"I have promised to go there every day for fifteen days," replied Bernadette.

"All these things are tales!" exclaimed the exasperated commissary; "I will put you all in prison if this girl continues to collect multitudes together with her grimaces."

"I go there quite by myself," said Bernadette, "to pray; I call nobody to go with me, and if such a crowd comes after me or before me, it is not my fault. It is because they say it was the holy Virgin, but for myself I do not know who it is."

Accustomed to quibbles, to the twists and subterfuges of the world of rogues, the officer of police was disconcerted at such profound simplicity. His craft, his marvellous skill, his captious questions, his threats, all the shrewd or terrible artifices of his profession, had hitherto broken down in opposition to what had seemed to him at first, and still seemed to him, weakness itself.

"Really," exclaimed he, stamping with his foot, "here is a stupid affair!" And letting the

Soubirous return home, he ran to see the Procureur Impérial.

M. Dutour, in spite of his horror of superstition, could not find in the arsenal of our codes any text that enabled him to treat the girl who saw the apparition as a criminal. She called no persons together; she derived no profit in money from all these things; she went to pray upon land that was common, open to everybody, and where no law forbade her from going down upon her knees; she did not attempt to hold with the apparition any discourse subversive of or opposed to the government; the populations did not give themselves up to any disorder. There was evidently no cause to proceed with severity.

As to prosecuting Bernadette for the crime of "false intelligence," it was established experimentally that she never contradicted herself; and unless a contradiction in her words could be fully proved, it was difficult to show that she lied, without attacking directly the principle itself of supernatural apparitions, a principle at all times admitted by the Catholic Church. Now without the consent of the high authorities in the magistracy and the state, a simple Procureur Impérial could not take on himself to engage in such a conflict.

In order that she might be liable to prosecution, it required at least that Bernadette should some day or other contradict herself; that either her parents should get some gain by what was going on, or that the crowd should involve itself in some disorder.

All this might happen.

From this hypothesis to the desire of realizing it, from this clear view of the situation in minds inimical to popular fanaticism to the wish to lay snares for the multitude or for the child, there would be but one step for vulgar natures who busied themselves in the official world. But M. Jacomet was a functionary, and the morality of the police is sheltered from such suspicions. It is only evil-thinking minds that can believe in the existence of provocative agents.

XXV.

The following morning, (Tuesday, February 23,) the crowd assembled in front of the grotto before sunrise. Bernadette came there with that calm simplicity which neither the threatening hostility of some, nor the enthusiastic veneration of others, could alter. The sadness and anguish of the previous day had left some traces on her countenance. She was afraid still that the apparition would no longer reappear, and whatever was her hope, she did not dare to give herself up to it.

She humbly went on her knees, placing one of her hands on a blessed taper which she had brought, or which was given to her, and holding her rosary in the other.

The weather was calm, and the flame of the taper did not ascend to heaven more direct than the prayer of that soul towards the invisible regions whence the blessed apparition was accustomed to descend. It was thus no doubt;

for scarcely had the child prostrated herself than the unspeakable Beauty, whose return she invoked so ardently, was manifested to her eyes, and ravished her out of herself. The august Sovereign Lady of Paradise cast upon the child of this world a look full of inexpressible tenderness, appearing to love her still more since she had suffered. She, the greatest, the most sublime, the most powerful of created beings ; she, whose glory, ruling all ages and filling eternity, makes all other created glory to pale or rather to disappear ; she, the Daughter, the Spouse, and the Mother of God, seemed to render altogether intimate and familiar the bonds that united her to this little unknown and ignorant girl, to this humble guardian of sheep. She called her by her name, with that harmonious voice the profound charm of which ravishes the ears of angels.

“ Bernadette,” said the Divine Mother.

“ Here I am,” said the child.

“ I have to tell you, for yourself alone, and concerning yourself, a secret. Do you promise me never to repeat it to anybody in the world ?”

“ I promise you not to do so,” said Bernadette.

The dialogue continued, and entered into profound mystery, which it is neither possible nor permitted for us to penetrate. Whatever it may have been, when this sort of intimacy was established the Queen of the Eternal Kingdom beheld this child, who the day before had suffered, and who was still to suffer for the love of her, and it pleased her to choose her as the ambassadress of one of her desires among men.

"And now, my child," said she to Bernadette, "go and tell the priests that I will that they should erect here a chapel in my honour." And in pronouncing these words, her physiognomy, her look and gesture, seemed to promise that she would scatter there graces without number.

Having given this command, she disappeared; and the countenance of Bernadette returned to the shade, as the earth returns to it in the evening, when the sun has, by degrees, sunk below the horizon.

The multitude pressed around the child. All hearts were moved. Questions were put on all sides. No one asked her if the vision had taken place; for at the moment of the ecstasy all had felt, all were conscious, that the apparition was there; but they desired to know what had been said. Every one endeavoured to approach the child, and to hear her.

"What has she said to you?"—"What has the vision told you?" was a question that issued from every mouth.

"She has told me two things: one for myself alone, and the other for the priests; and I am going immediately to them," replied Bernadette, eager to resume the road to Lourdes, in order to fulfil her commission.

She was astonished that day, as previously, that everybody did not hear the dialogue, and did not see the Lady. "The vision speaks loud enough for persons to hear," said she; "and I also, I raise my voice as I usually do." Now, during the ecstasy it was clearly remarked that

the lips of the child moved, but that was all; no word could be distinguished. In this mystical state the senses are in some way spiritualized, and the realities which strike them are absolutely imperceptible by the gross organs of our fallen nature. Bernadette saw and heard, she herself spoke; and nevertheless, no one around her perceived the sound of her voice, nor the form of the apparition. Was Bernadette mistaken? No; she alone was right. She alone, aided by the spiritual help of extatic grace, perceived momentarily what escaped the senses of all others. In the same way an astronomer, aided by the material help of a telescope, contemplates for a moment in the heavens an enormous star, which is at a great distance, and invisible to ordinary eyes. Out of the ecstasy, Bernadette no longer saw anything; just as, without his powerful optical instrument, which centuples the power of the eye, the astronomer is, for the discovery of the hidden star, as powerless as anybody else.

XXVI.

What had been, however, that strange and intimate communication, that secret, of which Bernadette spoke without being willing to tell its nature? Between the Mother of the All-powerful Creator of heaven and earth, and the humble daughter of the miller Soubirous; between that radiant majesty, the highest after God; between that supreme Queen of the realms

of infinity, and the little shepherdess of the hills of Bartrès, what secret could there be? Assuredly we shall not attempt to conjecture, and should consider it a sacrilege to listen at the gates of heaven.

However, it is permissible for us to observe the profound and delicate knowledge of the human heart, and the maternal wisdom which doubtless determined the august speaker with Bernadette to cause some words entirely of a secret nature to precede the public mission with which she invested her. Favoured in the eyes of all with marvellous visions, entrusted towards the priests of God with a message from beyond this world, this childlike soul, hitherto so tranquil and so solitary, found herself all at once transported into the midst of innumerable crowds and infinite disquiets. She was to be a mark for the contradictions of some, the threats of others, the raileries of many, and what was still more dangerous for her, the enthusiastic veneration of a large number of people. The days were approaching in which the multitudes were to receive her with acclamations, and would dispute together for shreds of her garments as holy relics; when eminent and illustrious personages would go down on their knees before her, and ask her benediction; when a magnificent temple would be raised, whole populations would be stirred up, and incessant processions take place on the faith of her word. And thus this poor girl of the people was on the point of encountering the most terrible trial that could assail her humility, a trial in which she might

lose for ever her simplicity and openness of mind, all those modest and tender virtues which had germinated and flourished in the bosom of solitude. The graces themselves which she received became for her a formidable danger, a danger under which more than once chosen souls, honoured with the favours of heaven, had succumbed. St. Paul himself, after his visions, was tempted by pride, and needed an angel of Satan to buffet his flesh to prevent him from being puffed up in his heart.

The holy Virgin willed, however, to shield this little girl whom she loved, without permitting the evil one to approach this lily of purity and innocence, expanding in the rays of her favour. Now, what does the mother when a danger threatens her child? She clasps her more and more tenderly to her bosom, and says to her, in a *low voice*, in the mystery of a word gently whispered into her ear: "Fear nothing, I am at hand." And if she is obliged to quit her a moment, and leave her alone, she adds: "I am not going far off; I am a few steps from you, and you have only to hold out your hand to take hold of mine." Thus did for Bernadette the Mother of us all. At the moment when the world and its different temptations, Satan and his subtle snares, would strive to snatch her away from her, she desired to have more intimate relations with her. She clasped her in her arms, and pressed her more closely to her heart. To tell—she, the Queen of Heaven, —a secret to a child of the earth, it amounted to all this: it was the lifting up of Bernadette

to her lips, and speaking in confidence; thus it was the founding in her memory of an inaccessible place of refuge, an abode of peace and intimacy which none could come and disturb.

A secret, confided and heard, creates between two souls the closest of bonds. To tell a secret, is to give an assured pledge of affectionate confidence and fidelity; it is to establish a closed and, as it were, a sacred place of meeting between two hearts. When any one of importance, when any one very high above us, has revealed their secret to us, we can no longer have any doubt about him. His friendship has, through this intimate confidence, taken up a kind of domicile in us, and he becomes thereby a constant guest,—I was going to say with more exactness—an indweller of our soul. To think of this secret is, in a certain manner, mysteriously to clasp their hand, and to feel it present to us.

A secret confided by the holy Virgin to Bernadette became thus for the latter the most secure of safeguards. It is not a point of theology which teaches us this; it is a study of the human heart itself that makes it evident.

XXVII.

When Bernadette reached the town, the crowd of people had hastened on before, to see what she was going to do.

The child went down the road which crosses Lourdes, forming its principal street; then,

stopping before the wall enclosing a rustic garden, she opened a green lattice-work gate, and went towards the house to which the garden belonged.

The crowd, through a feeling of respect and propriety, did not follow Bernadette, and stayed in the street.

Humble and simple, clad in her poor clothes, that were mended in many places, her head and shoulders covered with her little white capulet of coarse cloth, having, in a word, no exterior sign of a message from on high, save, perhaps, that royal mantle of poverty which Jesus Christ has worn, the messenger of the Divine Virgin who appeared at the grotto presented herself to the venerable man in whom was personified, in that corner of the earth, and for that child, the indefectible authority of the Catholic Church.

Although it was still an early hour, Monsieur the Curé of Lourdes had already said the Divine Office.

We do not know if at the moment at which, for the first time, he was going to hear this poor shepherdess, so little in the eyes of flesh and the world, so great, perhaps, before heaven, his memory recalled the different words which he had pronounced that very day at the Introit and Gradual of the Mass: "*In medio Ecclesiae aperuit os ejus... Lingua ejus loquetur iudicium. Lex Dei ejus in corde ejus.*" "His lips have spoken in the midst of the Church... His tongue hath uttered what is just... The law of God is in his heart."*

* 22nd February, Feast of St. Peter Damian. Introit and Gradual at Mass.

The Abbé Peyramale, though fully penetrated, as a faithful and devout son of the Church, with the conviction of the possibility of apparitions, had some difficulty in believing in this extraordinary vision, which, according to the word of a child, had manifested itself on the banks of the Gave, in the grotto, till lately unknown, of the rocks of Massabielle. The sight of the ecstasy would have doubtless convinced him; but he had seen none of these things except through the eyes of others, and great doubts still remained in his mind, firstly, as to the reality of the apparitions, and next, as to their divine character. The angel of darkness transforms himself sometimes into an angel of light, and a certain degree of anxiety is legitimate in such matters. He judged it necessary, besides, to test by himself the sincerity of the girl who saw the apparition. He therefore received Bernadette with mistrust, and with a sternness amounting even to severity.

Although he had held himself, as we have said, aloof from these events, and had not in his life spoken to Bernadette, so recently become one of his flock, he knew her by sight, several persons having pointed her out to him, one or two days before, when she was passing in the street.

"Are you not Bernadette, the daughter of Soubirous the miller?" said he, when, after having crossed the garden, she presented herself before him.

The eminent priest, whose portrait we have drawn, was as familiar with his parishioners as a father, and he had a custom of seeking out

and knowing the little children of his flock. Only on this particular day was the tone of the father severe.

"Yes, it is I, Monsieur le Curé," replied the humble messenger of the Blessed Virgin.

"Well, Bernadette, what do you want with me? What are you come here for?" replied he, not without roughness of manner, and at the same time casting a look on the child, the cold reserve and the severe inquiry of which were calculated to disconcert a mind that had little confidence in itself.

"Monsieur le Curé, I am come on the part of the Lady who appeared to me at the grotto of Massabielle.".....

"Ah, yes," said the priest, cutting her speech short, "you pretend to have visions, and run all over the country with your stories. What does all this mean? What has happened? What are these extraordinary things which you tell of, and for which there is no proof?"

Bernadette was pained and surprised, perhaps, in her innocence, at the severe attitude and the almost harsh tone which Monsieur Peyramale had adopted in receiving her, he who habitually was so paternal and so kind to his parishioners, and particularly with the humble and little ones.

Bernadette, her heart somewhat oppressed, but without any agitation, and in the tranquil assurance of the truth, related simply what the reader already knows.

The man of God knew how to be superior to his personal prejudices. Accustomed for a long

time to read the depths of hearts, he admired within himself, whilst she spoke, the perfectly truthful character of this little peasant girl, relating in her own language events so marvellous. Through those limpid eyes, beneath that candid countenance, he perceived the profound innocence of that privileged soul. It was impossible for his noble and upright nature to hear such an expression of truth, and to behold those harmonious and modest features, in which all was goodness, without feeling himself inferiorly led to believe the word of the child.

The incredulous themselves, we have above explained, no longer questioned the sincerity of the girl who saw the vision. In her ecstasies, the truth that came from above seemed wholly to illuminate her within, and to enter into her very soul. In her descriptions, truth seemed to come forth from her person, and to shed its rays, warming hearts, and dissipating, like empty clouds, the confused objections of the mind. This extraordinary child had, in a word, around her, as it were, an aureole of truth, and her words had the gift of chasing away all doubts.

However inflexible and decided was the character of M. Peyramale, whatever may have been his firmness of mind and soul, however strong was his distrust, his heart was strangely affected by an emotion—in appearance inexplicable—at the words of that Bernadette of whom people were speaking so much, and whom he heard for the first time. This man, so resolute, found himself conquered by this all-powerful weakness. Yet he had too much command over himself, too

much prudence, to yield to an impression which, after all, might have been misleading. As a private individual, he would have said, perhaps, to the child, "I believe you." But as the pastor of a large flock, appointed as the guardian of truth, he had determined not to yield except to palpable and visible proofs. No muscle of his face betrayed his inward emotion. He had strength to keep up towards the child his severe physiognomy.

"And you do not know the name of this lady?"

"No," replied Bernadette, "she has not told me who she is."

"Those who believe you," replied the priest, "imagine that it is the holy Virgin Mary. But do you know well," added he, with a voice that was serious and vaguely threatening, "that if you falsely pretend to see her in this grotto, you are taking the way never to see her in heaven? Here you pretend to be the only one who sees her; above, if you lie in this world, others shall see her, and you, for your deception, shall be for ever far from her, for ever in hell."

"I do not know if she is the holy Virgin, Monsieur le Curé," replied the child, "but I see a vision as I see you, and she speaks to me as you speak to me. And I am come, on her behalf, to say to you that she wills that there shall be erected a chapel at the rocks of Massabielle, where she appears to me."

The Curé looked at this child, intimating to him this formal command with such complete assurance; and, in spite of his previous emotion,

he could not, before the puny appearance of the ambassadress of heaven, help smiling at this strange message. The idea that this child was under an illusion succeeded to the emotion of his heart, and doubt resumed the upper hand.

He made Bernadette repeat over the very words which the Lady at the grotto had used.

"After having confided to me the secret which concerns me, and which I cannot reveal, she added: 'And now, go and tell the priests that I will that they should build a chapel to me here.'"

The priest kept silence for a moment. "After all," thought he, "it is possible." And this thought, that the Mother of God had sent to him,—to him, a poor unknown priest,—a direct message, filled him with agitation. Then he cast his eyes on the child, and asked himself: "Where then is the guarantee that this little girl is not the sport of some illusion?"

"If the Lady of whom you speak to me is truly the Queen of Heaven," answered he, "I shall be happy, according to my ability, to contribute to a chapel to be erected to her. But your word is not a certainty. Nothing obliges me to believe you. I do not know who this Lady is, and before I can occupy myself about what she asks, I want to know what right she has to it. Ask her, therefore, to give me some proof of her power."

The window was open, and the glance of the priest, directed over the garden, observed the checked vegetation, and its temporary death, caused by the rigour of winter.

"The apparition, you say, has at its feet a wild rose tree, a sweet briar that comes out from the rocks. We are in the month of February. Tell her, on my part, that if she will have the chapel, she must cause the rose tree to bloom."

And he sent the child away.

People soon knew all the details of the interview which had taken place between Bernadette and the priest, venerated by everybody, who was at that period curé of the town of Lourdes.

"He has not given her a good reception," said the philosophers and learned folks with satisfaction; "he has too much sense to believe in the reveries of an hallucination; he has extricated himself from a difficult position with infinite dexterity. On the one hand, to give his assent to such follies was impossible for a man of his intelligence and uprightness; and on the other, to oppose to the whole affair a pure and simple negation, would have been to have had all this fanatic multitude on his back. Instead of stumbling on this double rock, and letting himself be caught upon the horns of a dilemma, he gets quietly out of the difficulty, and without running counter to the popular belief, very craftily demands a visible, palpable, and certain proof of the apparition, a miracle, in a word, that is to say, an impossibility. He condemns the lie or the illusion to refute themselves, and with the thorn of a wild rose tree he bursts the bubble. It is a very clever idea."

Jacomet, M. Dutour, and their friends, were rejoiced at this calling to account of the invisible being of the grotto. "The apparition is sum-

moned to show its passport," was the word which they repeated as they smiled with official consequence.

"The sweet briar will bloom," said the most firm among the believers, those who still felt the impression of the spectacle of Bernadette in ecstasy.

A great number, though having a full faith in the apparition, dreaded a trial. The heart of man is thus constituted, and the centurion of the Gospel spoke as the greater part of us speak, when he said: "*Credo Domine, adjuva incredulitatem meam,*"—"I believe, O Lord, help my incredulity."

Both one and the other awaited with impatience the following day.

XXVIII.

Among those whom a lofty contempt for superstition had hitherto prevented taking any part, in order to examine matters, with the crowds of people, several resolved to go henceforth to the grotto, in order to be present at the disappointment of the multitude. One of these was M. Estrade, that receiver of indirect taxes, of whom we have already spoken, and who was with M. Jacomet when he examined Bernadette. He had been then, we may remember, forcibly struck by the singular tone of sincerity displayed by the child, and not being able to doubt her good faith, he had attributed her statements to the results of hallucination. Sometimes, how-

ever, this first impression wearing off, he inclined to the solution by Jacomet, who continued to see nothing in the affair but a very skilful comedy, and a miracle of trickery. His philosophy, being otherwise firm in its principles, oscillated between these two explanations, the only ones possible according to him. His contempt for such mystical extravagances and impostures was such that, in spite of his secret curiosity, he had made it till this moment a point of honour not to go to the rocks of Massabielle. He decided, nevertheless, that very day to go there, partly to be present at a whimsical spectacle, partly to observe, a little also through complaisance and to accompany his sister, who was much affected at these reports, and some ladies of the neighbourhood. He related to us his impressions, which are beyond suspicion.

"I went," he told us, "fully determined to examine, and, I fully admit, to amuse myself and laugh, expecting merely a comedy or some grotesque extravagance. An immense concourse of people collected by degrees around these wild rocks. I wondered at the simplicity of so many simpletons, and laughed to myself at the credulity of a crowd of worthy women, who were devoutly on their knees before the rocks. We came very early in the morning, and, thanks to my elbows, I succeeded without difficulty in getting to the front. At the customary hour, towards sunrise, Bernadette arrived. I was near her. I remarked in her child-like features that character of sweetness, innocence, and profound tranquillity which had struck me several

days before when with the commissary. She went down on her knees, naturally, without ostentation or embarrassment, without confusion, or being put out by the crowd which surrounded her, absolutely as if she had been alone in a church, or in a lonely wood, far from the sight of men. She took out her rosary, and began to pray. Soon her gaze appeared to receive and reflect an unknown light; it became fixed, and remained—full of admiration, ravished, radiant with happiness—on the opening of the rock. I directed my eyes immediately there, and I saw nothing, absolutely nothing, but the leafless branches of the sweet briar. And, nevertheless, what shall I say to you? In presence of the transfiguration of the child all my former prejudices, my philosophical objections, my pre-conceived denials, fell at once, and gave way to an extraordinary feeling which took possession of me in spite of myself. I had the certainty, I had the irresistible intuition, that a mysterious being was there. My eyes did not see her; but my soul, and that of innumerable spectators at that solemn hour, beheld it as well as myself, with the inward light of evidence. Yes, I attest it, a divine being was there. Suddenly and completely transfigured, Bernadette was no longer Bernadette. She was an angel of heaven plunged into unspeakable raptures. She had no longer the same countenance; but another intelligence, another life, I was going to say another soul, were depicted on it. She no longer resembled herself; she seemed to be another person. Her attitude, her slightest

gestures, the manner, for example, in which she made the sign of the cross, had a nobility, a dignity, a greatness more than human. She opened wide her eyes, which, insatiable in beholding, continued fixed and almost immovable; she feared, as it seemed, to lower the eyelid, and lose for a single instant the ravishing sight of the marvel she contemplated. She smiled at the invisible being, and all this gave a powerful idea of her ecstasy and bliss. I was not less moved than other spectators. Like them, I held my breath, to try and hear the discourse that was taking place between the vision and the child. She listened with an expression of the most profound awe, or, to speak better, of most profound veneration, mingled with a love beyond bounds and the sweetest of transports. Sometimes, however, a tincture of sadness passed over her countenance, but its habitual expression was that of exceeding joy. I observed that at times she ceased to breathe. During all this time she had her rosary in her hand, sometimes motionless, (for sometimes she appeared to forget it, plunged in the contemplation of the heavenly being,) sometimes sliding more or less regularly through her fingers. Each of her movements was in perfect accord with her physiognomy, which expressed by turns admiration, prayer, and joy. She made at intervals those signs of the cross that were so pious, so noble, so marked by a power of which I have just spoken. If in heaven signs of the cross are made, they are assuredly like those of Bernadette in her ecstasy. This gesture of the child,

restricted as it altogether was, seemed in some manner to embrace the infinite. At a particular moment Bernadette advanced, moving on her knees, from the point where she prayed, that is, from the banks of the Gave to the bottom of the grotto. This was about fifteen feet. Whilst she mounted this declivity, which was somewhat abrupt, those who were along her route heard her very distinctly pronouncing these words: ‘Penance! Penance! Penance!’

“A few moments afterwards she got up, and resumed the road to the town in the midst of the crowd. It was a poor girl in tatters, who seemed to have only had a common part at so surprising a spectacle.”

During all this scene, however, the wild rose-tree had never flowered. Its bare and unsightly branches twined themselves motionless along the rock, and it was in vain that the multitude awaited the balmy and charming miracle which the first pastor of the town had demanded.

A circumstance worthy of remark! The belief of the faithful was little staggered by it; and in spite of this apparent protestation of inanimate nature against all supernatural power, several men of importance, amongst others he whose description we have just related, felt themselves converted to the faith by the wondrous spectacle of the transfiguration of the girl who saw the vision.

XXIX.

"Well, then, have you seen her again to-day ; and what did she say to you ?" demanded the Curé of Lourdes, when Bernadette presented herself to him on her return from the grotto.

"I have seen the vision," answered the child ; "and I said to her : 'M. le Curé asks you to give some proofs, for example, to cause the rose tree which is beneath your feet to flower, because my word does not suffice for the priests, and they are not willing to trust to me.' Then she smiled, but without speaking. Then she told me to pray for sinners, and commanded me to mount as far as I could into the grotto. And she cried out three times the words : 'Penance ! Penance ! Penance !' which I repeated while I drew myself on my knees to the bottom of the grotto. There she revealed to me again a second secret which is personal to myself. Then she disappeared."

"And what did you find at the bottom of the grotto ?"

"I looked after she had disappeared, (for while she was there I paid no attention except to her—she absorbs me,) and I only saw the rock, and some blades of grass which shot up in the midst of the dust."

The Curé remained lost in thought.

"Let us wait," said he.

In the evening M. l'abbé Peyramale related this interview to the vicars of Lourdes, and to

several priests in the environs. They joked their dean on the ill success of his demand.

"If it is the holy Virgin, dearest master," said they, "that smile, on hearing your request, seems to us unpleasant for you; irony coming from such high quarters appears calculated to cause uneasiness."

The Curé eluded this view with his usual presence of mind.

"That smile is in my favour," replied he. "The holy Virgin mocks at nobody. If I had spoken amiss she would not have smiled; she would have been moved to pity at my reasons. She has smiled. Then she has approved."

XXX.

There was certainly some truth in the quick reply of the Abbé Peyramale, but perhaps a little less than he thought. Assuredly, if at this moment, with his profound sagacity and his elevation of soul, he had maturely reflected on the words which the heavenly apparition had pronounced a short time after she smiled, he would have comprehended the sense of that smile, which the poor child, though favoured with such visions, was unable to interpret.

"To pray for sinners, to do penance, to climb on one's knees the steep and painful ascent which ran from the rapid and tumultuous waters of the torrent to the immovable rock on which was to be founded one of the sanctuaries of the Church." Such had been the orders of the

apparition after the prayer of the child ; such her answer to the request to cause the wild rose tree to flower ; such, from her own mouth, the clearest commentary on her smile. Who does not see, when reflecting on it, the admirable meaning of this symbolic answer ?

" And what ! though I am the Mother of God the Saviour, the Mother of that Jesus who went about doing good and consoling the afflicted, must I be thus solicited, as a proof of my power, for merely the idle and frail marvel which in a few days the rays of my servant the sun will accomplish ? When a multitude of sinners, indifferent or hostile to the law of God, cover the surface of the globe ; when populations that are guilty or erring quench their thirst in the poisoned waters of this world, in those troubled torrents that flow into the abyss ; when they have, before all, need to mount upon their knees the rude path which separates from the immutable life of the spirit the fleeting and troubled life of the flesh ; when the salvation of so many unhappy ones, and the cure of so many sick, are the constant anxiety of my maternal heart ; have I not better testimonies to give of my power and goodness than to cause roses to flower in winter ? And is it for so vain and frivolous an object that I appear to a young child on the earth, and that I open before her my hand full of graces ? "

Such, it seems to us, as much as it is permitted for a miserable man to penetrate and interpret things so high, was the profound meaning of that smile, and of those orders by

which the Mother of the human race replied to the demand of the rector of Lourdes.

God does not deign, above all in evil and necessitous times, to sport, as it were, with His omnipotence over trifling marvels which only strike the eyes,—ephemeral signs which fade away before night, and which the first blast of wind carries away. God intends to do things that are useful and good, and His miracles are always benefits. When He wills to establish something that is eternal, He sustains it forthwith by an eternal proof, which ages cannot touch.

What was, however, the meaning of the order given to Bernadette, to mount the soil of the grotto upon her knees until she was stopped by the steepness of the arid rock? No one knew it: and before this dry rock no one reflected that since the synagogue had destroyed itself by thinking to kill Jesus, the rod of Moses had passed as an inheritance to the Christian people.

The Curé of Lourdes, in spite of his great intelligence, did not see all at once the things which the future would render evident. The strong doubt, deep in his mind, as to the reality of the apparition, hindered him from meditating with attentive care upon the different circumstances of the scene at the grotto, and from directing to them that clear perception which he was accustomed to direct to the things of God.

Though somewhat disconcerted in presence of the conversions made that same day at the rocks of Massabielle by the extraordinary trans-

figuration of Bernadette, the freethinkers of the locality triumphed in a singular manner at the check experienced by believers, on the subject of the humble and graceful proof exacted by the Curé Peyramale. They praised this latter still more than the day previously, for having required a miracle.

"Jacomet," said they, "was very clumsy, in wishing to kill the apparition; the Curé, much more skilful, compels it to kill itself." Incapable of understanding the genuine simplicity of that impartial wisdom which, without doubt, required proofs before believing, but also before denying, they called that cunning which was prudence, and beheld a snare in the ingenuous demand of an upright soul in search of truth. It required but little, evidently, for these gentlemen on this occasion to offer the pastor of Lourdes the honour, very great perhaps, but assuredly most unmerited, of reckoning him as one of themselves.

XXXI.

The honourable M. Jacomet appeared, nevertheless, to owe himself a grudge for not having, as he wished, detected the villainy in the very act, and destroyed, by his sole efforts, this rising superstition. He racked his brains to guess the enigma, for he began to see clearly, by the demand even of the Curé of Lourdes, that the clergy had nothing to do with this affair. He had, then, only this little girl and her

parents to deal with. He doubted not, some way or other, to get to the bottom of it.

When, by chance, Bernadette went out into the street, the crowd pressed around her; they stopped her at every step; each one wanted to hear from her mouth the details of the apparition. Many, among whom was M. Dufo, the lawyer, one of the most eminent men in that country, sent for and questioned her. They offered no resistance to the secret power which truth put into her words.

Many persons went during the day to call upon the Soubirous, to hear the statements of Bernadette. She listened with all candour and complaisance to these endless inquiries; it seemed that to give testimony to what she had seen and heard became henceforth her particular function and duty.

In a corner of the room which they entered, a little chapel adorned with flowers, medals, and pious prints, and surmounted by a statue of the Blessed Virgin, presented a certain appearance of luxury, and attested the piety of the family. All the rest of the chamber was painfully bare. A truckle bedstead, some shabby chairs, a ricketty table, formed all the furniture of the home where people came to be informed of the splendid secrets of heaven. Most of the visitors, moved by the sight of extreme indigence everywhere visible, did not resist the pleasing temptation to leave some remembrance, some alms, for these poor people. But the child and her parents always refused, and in

such a manner that no one could insist on pressing them.

Among these visitors, several were strangers to the town. One of these came one evening, when the concourse of the day had subsided, and when there was only a neighbour seated by the fire. He carefully interrogated Bernadette, not wishing her to omit any detail, and appearing to take an extraordinary interest in the narrative of the child. His enthusiasm and faith proclaimed themselves every moment by exclamations full of tenderness. He congratulated Bernadette on having received such a great favour from heaven, then he was moved with pity at the poverty of which he saw the marks around him.

"I am rich," said he; "permit me to assist you."

And he laid on the table a purse, half open, and evidently filled with gold.

A blush of indignation mounted into Bernadette's countenance.

"I wish for nothing, sir," said she, quickly.
"Take it back."

And she thrust back towards the unknown the purse deposited on the table.

"It is not for you, my child, it is for your parents, who are in want, and whom you cannot hinder me from succouring."

"Neither Bernadette nor ourselves wish for anything," said the father and mother.

"You are poor," continued the stranger, pressingly; "I have disturbed you; I am in-

terested in you. Is it through pride that you refuse?"

"No, sir; but we wish to receive nothing, absolutely nothing. Take away your gold."

The unknown took back his purse, and went out, not being able to dissemble a physiognomy that was very much disappointed.

Whence did this man come, and who was he? Was he a compassionate benefactor, or was he a skilful tempter? We are ignorant. The police were so well trained at Lourdes, that Jacomet, more fortunate than ourselves, knew perhaps this secret, and could have told, better than any one else, the meaning of the enigma.

Then, if by one of those chances sometimes to be met with in police affairs, the very crafty commissary of police should learn the same evening the details of this scene between Bernadette and the mysterious stranger, he would see that snares and temptations were as useless against this extraordinary child as captious words and violent threats. The knot of the situation became more and more inextricable for that personage, so profoundly skilful notwithstanding, and so expert in things purely human. If the impossibility of causing the smallest contradiction to be made in the statement of Bernadette had surprised him, her absolute disinterestedness, her firmness in rejecting a purse of gold, could not but plunge him into a perfect stupor.

Such conduct would be fully explained to police wisdom, if the demand made by the Curé, of a visible proof, of a miracle, in the impossible

flowering of a wild rose-tree, had not shown with the clearest evidence that the clergy were not concealed behind the girl who saw the vision. But Bernadette and her parents, *reduced to themselves*, poor, in want, needing bread, and deriving no profit from the popular enthusiasm and credulity, were an altogether inconceivable phenomenon.

Had the little girl invented her imposture to acquire for herself an empty fame? But, besides that such ambitious acts appeared scarcely probable with a rustic guardian of sheep, how was it possible to explain the indestructible unity of her statement, how explain that her disinterestedness should extend itself to her family, all so poor, and consequently so liable to be tempted to speculate upon the blind faith of the multitudes?

M. Jacomet was not a man to be staggered by a few insoluble objections, and he awaited with confidence the course of events, not doubting in any degree but that they had a triumph in reserve for him, and so much the more glorious as it was beset, at first, with difficulties and obstacles.

XXXII.

Night had ended the agitation of so many and such opposite minds, some believing in the reality of the apparition, others remaining in doubt, a certain number absolutely denying it. The dawn had just risen, and the universal

Church, over the whole surface of the globe, sweetly uttered, in the depths of her sanctuaries, in the silence of lonely presbyteries, in the peopled shade of the cloisters, under the vaulted roofs of abbeys and convents, those words of the psalmist in the office of matins: "*Tu es Deus qui facis mirabilia. Notam fecisti in populis virtutem tuam... Viderunt te aquæ Deus, viderunt te aquæ et timuerunt, et turbatæ sunt abyssi.*" Thou art the God that doest wonders. Thou hast made Thy power known among the nations.....The waters saw Thee, O God, the waters saw Thee, and they were afraid, and the depths were troubled."*

Bernadette, having arrived at the Rocks of Massabielle, went down on her knees.

An immense multitude had gone before her to the grotto, and were pressing around her. Although there were a good number of sceptics, some who refused to believe, and others who went from simple curiosity, a religious silence was at once observed as soon as they perceived the child. A shiver, a strange sensation, passed over that crowd. All, by an unanimous instinct, incredulous as well as believers, uncovered their heads before her. Many went on their knees at the same time as the miller's daughter.

At this moment the divine apparition manifested itself to Bernadette, who was suddenly ravished in a marvellous manner. As on all occasions, the luminous Virgin stood in the

* Psalm lxxvi. 15, 16, 17.

oval excavation of the rock, her feet upon the wild rose tree.

Bernadette contemplated her with a feeling of inexpressible love, a sweet and profound feeling, which inundated her soul with delight, without troubling her mind in any way, or making her forget that she was still upon the earth.

The Mother of God loved this innocent child. She wished, through an intimacy more and more close, to press her still more to her breast; she wished to strengthen still more the bond which united her to the humble shepherdess, in order that this latter might be sensible, in the midst of the agitations of this world, that the Queen of Heaven held her invisibly by the hand.

"My child," said she, "I wish to confide to you, still for yourself alone, and concerning you alone, a last secret; which, as well as the two others, you will not reveal to any one in the world."

We have explained above the profound reasons which formed, through this intimate confidence, the future safeguard of Bernadette, amid the moral dangers to which the extraordinary favours of which she had been the object would infallibly expose her. By this triple secret the holy Virgin invested her messenger, as it were, with a triple armour against the dangers and temptations of life.

Bernadette in the joy of her heart listened to the ineffable music of that voice, so sweet, so maternal, and so tender, which eighteen hundred years ago charmed the ears of the Infant God.

"And now," replied the holy Virgin, after some silence, "go, drink, and wash yourself in the fountain, and eat the grass which comes forth by its side."

Bernadette at this word "fountain" looked about her. No spring existed, or ever had existed at that spot. The child, without losing sight of the holy Virgin, turned quite naturally towards the Gave, the tumultuous waters of which were rushing along at some paces distant, over the pebble stones and broken rocks.

A word and gesture from the apparition stopped her in her walk.

"Do not go there," said the holy Virgin; "I did not say, 'Go and drink out of the Gave;' go to the fountain; it is here."

And stretching out her hand, that delicate and powerful hand to which nature is submissive, she pointed with her finger to the right side of the grotto, that same dried up corner, towards which, the morning of the day before, the child had already mounted on her knees.

Though she saw nothing at the spot indicated that seemed to have reference to the words of the heavenly vision, Bernadette obeyed the order. The vault of the grotto gradually became lower on that side, and the little girl climbed up upon her knees the space she had to get over.

When she had arrived at the place designated, she did not perceive before her any appearance of a fountain. Quite close up to the

rock here and there were growing some tufts of short grass, of the saxifragous family, called *Dorine*.

Whether it was at a fresh sign from the apparition, or whether through an interior movement in her soul, Bernadette, with that simple faith which so much pleases the Heart of God, stooped, and scraping the soil with her little hands, began to scoop out the earth.

The innumerable spectators at this scene, neither hearing nor seeing the apparition, did not know what to think of this singular work of the child. Already several began to laugh and think there was some derangement in the brain of the poor shepherdess. How little is required to shake our faith!

All at once the bottom of this little cavity which was scooped out by the child became moist. Coming from unknown depths, across the marble rocks and thick crust of the earth, a mysterious water began to gush forth drop by drop, under the hands of Bernadette, and to fill the small hollow which she had finished forming.

This new water, being mixed with the broken earth, at first was nothing but mud. Bernadette three times endeavoured to lift to her lips this muddy liquid; but three times her disgust was so strong that she rejected it without having the strength to swallow it. However, she wished above all to obey the radiant apparition who presided over this strange scene; at the fourth time, after a supreme effort, she overcame her repugnance. She

drank, she washed herself, she ate a piece of a wild plant which grew at the foot of the rock.

At this moment the water from the spring overflowed the banks of the little reservoir hollowed out by the child, and began to flow in a little stream, smaller perhaps than a straw, towards the crowd who were pressing before the grotto.

This stream was so very small that for a long time, that is, till the end of the day, the dried up earth absorbed it as it went along, and its progressive course was not traced save by the moisture exhibited on the soil, and which, lengthening by degrees, advanced with extreme slowness towards the Gave.

When Bernadette had accomplished, as we have just related, all the orders which she had received, the holy Virgin cast upon her a satisfied look, and an instant after disappeared from her eyes. The emotion of the multitude was great in presence of this prodigy. When Bernadette had come out of her ecstasy, people rushed to the grotto. Every one wanted to see with his own eyes the hollow out of which the water had started up under the hand of the child. Every one wanted to dip his handkerchief in it and bring a drop of it to his lips, so that this rising spring, the earthy reservoir of which was enlarged by degrees, soon took the form of a puddle of diluted mud. The spring, nevertheless, as the water was drawn out of it, became more and more abundant, the orifice through which it came from the depths being insensibly enlarged.

"It is water which has oozed by chance from the rock during the rainy season, and which, by chance also, has formed under the soil a little pool which the child has discovered, also by chance, when scraping up the ground," said the learned men of Lourdes.

And these philosophers contented themselves with this explanation.

The following day, the spring, stirred from mysterious depths by an unknown power, and visibly increasing, issued more and more strongly from the soil. It flowed already to the thickness of a finger. But the interior soil which it encountered through the earth to trace its first passage, rendered it still muddy. It was only at the end of several days that, after having augmented in some sort every hour, it ceased to swell, and became perfectly clear. It then flowed out of the earth by a very considerable fall, which had about the thickness of a child's arm. Let us not, however, anticipate events, but continue to follow them day by day, as we have hitherto done.

Let us resume them where we left them, that is to say, on the Thursday morning, the 25th February, at seven o'clock.

XXXIII.

Precisely at this very hour, at the moment when the spring, as a first divine testimony, gushed up gently but irresistibly under the

hand of Bernadette, the philosophy of Lourdes published, in the freethinking journal of the locality, a new article upon the events of the grotto.

The Lavedan, which we have already quoted, came from the press and was distributed in the town just at the moment when the astonished crowd was returning from the Massabielle Rocks. Now in this article, any more than in the preceding one, or in any of the descriptions which were written at that period, not a word was said as to any spring existing in the grotto. So that incredulity paralysed beforehand the audacious assertion on which, after a certain time, the freethinkers might be tempted to throw themselves, by saying that the spring always flowed there. Providence willed that, besides the public testimony, their own articles might be opposed to them—their own printed publications, with authentic, irrefutable dates. If before the 25th February, and the scene which we have just described,—before the order and indication given by the holy Virgin to Bernadette in ecstasy,—there had existed those beautiful gushing waters which exist to-day, how have your journals, whose eyes are so open, whose details are always so minute, not been able to perceive this powerful spring, and never spoken about it? We defy the freethinkers to produce a single document,—we say only *one*,—speaking of a spring or of water, before the period when the holy Virgin ordered it, and Nature obeyed.

XXXIV.

The popular emotion deepened and spread. Bernadette was received with acclamations as she passed by, and the poor child returned home with all haste in order to escape these ovations. This humble soul, who had lived hitherto unknown, in silence and solitude, found herself all at once placed in broad daylight in the midst of a tumult and a crowd, upon the pedestal of renown. This glory, which so many others seek, was for her the most cruel suffering. Her slightest words were commented upon, discussed, admired, contemned, mocked at, abandoned, in a word, to the varying opinions of those who disputed about them. And it was then that she tasted the innate joy of not having to say everything, and of finding, in the three secrets that the holy Virgin had revealed to her, a reserved sanctuary, as it were, into which she might in all peace withdraw her heart, and refresh it in the shadow of that mystery and in the charm of that intimacy with the Queen of Heaven. Days were at hand in which the trial of popularity was to become still greater.

As we have just related, the flowing of the spring had taken place towards sunrise, in presence of a numerous crowd. It was the 25th February, the third Thursday of the month, a great market day at Tarbes. The intelligence of the marvellous event which happened in the morning at the rocks of Massabielle was thus

carried to the chief town by a multitude of eye-witnesses, and spread the same evening through all the neighbouring departments. The extraordinary movement, which for eight days had attracted to Lourdes so many pilgrims and curious persons, assumed from this moment an unheard-of development.

A great number of visitors came to sleep at Lourdes, in order to be there the next day; others walked all night, and at the first rays of daylight, the hour at which Bernadette was accustomed to arrive, from five to six thousand persons, thronging the banks of the Gave, and the little hills and rocks, encamped in front of the grotto. The spring, more copious than the day before, was already considerable.

When the girl who beheld the apparition, humble, calm, and simple in the midst of this agitation, presented herself to pray, the populations exclaimed: "Behold the saint! Behold the saint!" Many sought to touch her garments, considering as sacred every object that belonged to her who was so privileged by the Lord.

The Mother of the humble and the lowly was desirous, however, that this innocent heart should not yield to the temptation of vain-glory, and that Bernadette might not become proud for an instant through the extraordinary favours of which she was the object. It was just that the child, in the midst of these acclamations, should feel that she was nothing, and that she should ascertain once more her utter want of power to evoke by herself the divine Vision. Vainly she prayed. The people in vain watched her

countenance for the superhuman splendour of an ecstasy, and when she rose up after her long prayer, she replied with sorrow to the inquiries of those who surrounded her, that the Vision from above had not appeared.

XXXV.

This absence of the holy Virgin had doubtless for its purpose, to maintain Bernadette in a state of humility and consciousness of her own nothingness; but it contained also, perhaps, for Christian people, a high and mysterious lesson, the import of which will not escape souls accustomed to contemplate and admire the secret harmonies of works which come specially from God.

If heaven was that day closed to the sight of Bernadette, if the celestial being who appeared in visible flesh seemed to have vanished for a time, the proof of her reality and power,—the fountain which had sprung up the day before, and was increasing more and more, was visible to all beholders, and flowing down the inclined soil of the grotto, before the eyes of astonished multitudes.

The holy Virgin withdrew to allow in some way her work to speak. The holy Virgin retired also and was silent to allow the Church in that country to speak, whose words at the Introit of the Mass, and at the responses for Matins, might serve as a commentary on that strange

fountain which had started up under the hand of Bernadette in ecstasy.

While, in fact, this was taking place at the grotto, before the miraculous source which had issued on the right side of the barren rock, there was being celebrated in the diocese of Tarbes, and several other dioceses of France, the memory of another source, the most illustrious and the most life-giving of all those which for six thousand years have watered the inheritance of the children of Adam. This very day, 26th February, 1858, Friday of the first week of Lent, was the Feast of the holy Lance and Nails of our Saviour. And the source of which we are speaking, and of which the special offices of the diocese proclaim the remembrance, was the great divine source which the lance of the Roman centurion, piercing the right side of Christ when dead, had caused to gush forth, a river of life to regenerate the earth and save the human race. "*Vidi aquam egredientem de templo, a latere dextro; et omnes ad quos pervenit aqua ista salvi facti sunt.*"—"I saw water flowing from the temple, on the right side, and all to whom that water came were saved," exclaimed the prophet, contemplating in the course of ages the prodigies of the divine mercy. "*On this day,*" said the priests in the office of Matins, "*there will be, for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, a fountain opened for the cleansing of sinners, and all who are defiled.*"*

* Order of the Diocese of Tarbes, Office of Matins, response for the second lesson of II nocturn.

By these truly wonderful coincidences, (and which we earnestly beg the reader to verify for himself, in the passage we have pointed out in the note,) — by such coincidences the Church in this country replied with striking clearness to the numberless questions raised around the marvellous spring issuing out at the side of the grotto at Massabielle. The source, which had just appeared at the base of the Pyrenees, arose, by a mysterious infiltration, from that immense river of divine graces which, under the nails of the soldiers and the lance of the centurion, began to flow eighteen hundred years since at the summit of Mount Golgotha.

Such was the secret principle to which we must go back to find the hidden origin of the miraculous spring, and it was meet that the offices celebrated at its point of departure should of themselves lead the mind towards these mystic heights. As to the practical results and exterior effects which this fountain of the apparition was to produce, we should very naturally inquire for the interpretation, no longer in the point of departure, no longer in the restricted circle and the exceptional feast of a particular diocese, but specially in the universal offices which the Church Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman, celebrated everywhere at that hour, throughout the Christian world. Now this same day, 26th February, 1858, Friday in the first week of Lent, the Gospel at the Mass contained these words, which need no comment: "Now there is at Jerusalem a pond called Probatica, which in Hebrew is

named Bethsaida, having five porches. *In these lay a great multitude of sick, blind, lame, and withered, waiting for the moving of the water.* For an angel of the Lord went down at a certain time into the pond ; and the water was moved. And he that went down first into the pond, after the moving of the water, **WAS MADE WHOLE OF WHATSOEVER INFIRMITY HE LAY UNDEE.**"*

XXXVI.

Although very few, doubtless, would see such analogies, the idea that the water that issued from the spring at the grotto might cure the sick, had entered the minds of all. From the morning of this same day, the report of several marvellous cures began to spread on all sides. In the midst of the contradictory versions that circulated, the sincerity of some narrators, the voluntary or involuntary exaggeration of others, the hesitation and trouble of mind of a great number, and the universal emotion, it was difficult at first to discern the true from the false amongst the miraculous facts alleged on all sides, but related in different ways, sometimes by mutilating names, sometimes by confounding persons, or mixing up the circumstances of several different episodes foreign to one another.

Have you ever, while walking in the country, suddenly thrown a handful of corn upon an ant-hill ? The affrighted ants run up and down in

* St. John v. 4-6.

extraordinary agitation ; they hurry to and fro, cross and run over one another, stop, resume their march, turn back, or quit the point to which they seemed to run, take up a grain of corn, then leave it,—wandering about everywhere in feverish disorder, a prey to inexplicable confusion.

Such were the multitudes of inhabitants and strangers at Lourdes, in their amazement at the supernatural marvels that came to them from heaven. Such is always, however, the natural world, when visited suddenly by the supernatural.

By degrees, nevertheless, tranquillity returned to the ant-hill, troubled for a moment.

It was now that the first of the miracles took place from the application of the water of the grotto, and the invocation of her who had caused it to flow. For the account of these episodes we refer the reader to our former work, entitled "*Our Lady of Lourdes*," from which all this first part is extracted, and which gives the details of the supernatural cures, in consequence of which the concourse at the grotto took such extraordinary proportions.

XXXVII.

Notwithstanding the immense concourse, all continued to proceed with the greatest order at the grotto. The people drank of the fountain, they sang hymns, they prayed.

Moreover, the soldiers of the garrison had

asked permission of their commanding officers to go to the place. With the instinct of discipline, developed by their military education, they marshalled the crowd, kept open a free passage, prevented the masses from pressing too closely on the dangerous banks of the Gave, and employed themselves on all sides, assuming a certain authority which no one thought of resisting.

Thus several days passed, during which the Apparition appeared as usual, and nothing remarkable or new occurred, except that the fountain continued to increase in volume, and the miraculous cures multiplied more and more.

By this time the world of freethinkers was stupified with astonishment. Facts became so numerous, well attested, and patent, that defections took place continually from the camp of the incredulous. Still there always remained a determined nucleus of strong minds, who only became more obstinate in their refusal to believe in the truth of events so apparent to an unprejudiced mind. This would seem impossible did not we know that a great part of the Jewish people resisted the miracles of Jesus Christ and His Apostles, and that it required four centuries of prodigies to open the eyes of the pagan world to the truth of Christianity.

XXXVIII.

On the 2nd of March, Bernadette appeared again before the parish priest of Lourdes, and for the second time spoke to him of the apparition.

"Her wish," said she, "is that a chapel shall be built, and processions made to the grotto."

Events had now made great progress. The fountain had gushed forth; cures had been effected and miracles wrought in the name of God, to attest the veracity of Bernadette. The priest required no further proof, and he demanded none. His mind was made up. His faith was now too firm to be again clouded by doubt.

The invisible Lady of the grotto had never told her name; but the man of God had already recognised her by her maternal benefits, and had perhaps already added to his prayers, "Our Lady of Lourdes, pray for us."

At the same time, in spite of the interior enthusiasm which filled his heart at the spectacle of all these wonders, he had with rare prudence refrained from giving premature expression to the profound sentiments of love and gratitude that filled his mind at the thought that the Queen of Heaven had deigned to descend amongst his humble flock; and this prudence had caused him to reiterate his directions to the clergy not to appear at the grotto.

"I believe you," he said to Bernadette, when she again presented herself before him. "But what you ask of me in the name of the apparition, I am not able to perform. That rests with the bishop, and I have already informed him of what has occurred. I shall now go to his lordship, and tell him what you have said of this new demand. It belongs to him alone to act."

XXXIX.

Notwithstanding the menacing attitude which had been assumed by the officials, the fame of these marvellous occurrences had spread into all the neighbouring provinces with the rapidity of lightning. Bigorre and Béarn had already been made acquainted with the earlier circumstances of the apparition, and the subsequent news of the sudden appearance of the miraculous fountain, and the marvellous cures which ensued, had stirred the population to its very depths. The whole department was aroused, and the roads were crowded with travellers, making all speed to witness these marvels for themselves. From all sides, and by every road and little footpath which led to Lourdes, vehicles of all kinds poured in; the stream of travellers was increasing, and even the darkness of night put no stop to this extraordinary movement: the mountaineers made their way down by the light of the stars, and the dawn of day found them at the grotto.

The earliest travellers had usually remained at Lourdes for some time, being unwilling to tear themselves away from the scene of such extraordinary events, so that the hotels, inns, and even the private houses, were overflowing with visitors, and it became almost impossible to find room for them all.

Many passed the night in prayer before the illuminated grotto, that in the morning they might be able to obtain the best places in the immediate neighbourhood of the girl who saw the apparition.

Thursday, the fourth of March, was the last day of the fortnight.

When the first rays of dawn brightened the horizon, a crowd still more prodigious than on the preceding days invaded the approach to the grotto.

A painter, such as Raphael or Michael Angelo, might have drawn from this living spectacle the subject for an admirable picture. Here, all bent with age, was a venerable patriarch, an old mountaineer, leaning with trembling hands on his staff. Around him pressed his whole family, from the grandmother, an ancient matron, with her wrinkled face muffled in her black mantle lined with red, down to the youngest grandson, raising himself on tiptoe in order to see the better. With their hands fervently joined together, beautiful, peaceful, and grave as the splendid virgins of the Roman Campagna, were the young girls of the mountains, praying singly or in groups. Many were busy with the rustic beads of their rosa-

ries. Some were silently reading their books of devotion. Others held in their hands, or upon their heads, an earthern pitcher, to be filled with the miraculous water, recalling to mind the Biblical figures of Rebecca or Rachel.

There was the peasant of the Gers, with his head round and strong, his bull neck, his firm and thick-set body.

At his side was the fine head and profile of the Bearnais peasant, which the innumerable portraits of Henry IV. have rendered so popular and well known.

Of middle height, but appearing tall from their marvellous uprightness, the Basque peasants stood around, in attitudes so absolutely motionless as to seem planted on the ground like statues; their large foreheads, their small and prominent chins, their whole features, in fact, bearing a distinctive type, betokening the absolute purity of their race, the most ancient, perhaps, of the whole country of the Gauls.

Presenting forms more polished, but at the same time less picturesque, were men of a higher grade, of all professions, magistrates, merchants, notaries, lawyers, and physicians, mixed in great numbers among the crowd. Ladies in hats and veils, with their hands buried in their muffs, were pacing to and fro, to warm themselves.

Calm and dignified, covered from head to foot by their cloaks of ample fold, stood some Spaniards, in sculptural tranquillity, absorbed in prayer.

In several places the pilgrims, fatigued by

travel or watching during the night, were seated on the ground. There were some who, in their forethought, had brought their *havre-sacs*, filled with provisions. Others carried by a strap around them a gourd filled with wine. Many children lay asleep on the ground, while their mothers deprived themselves of their *capulets* to cover them up warmly, and protect them from the chill morning air.

Cavalry officers from Tarbes, or from the dépôt at Lourdes, arrived on horseback, and took up their position in the running waters of the Gave, to avoid the general press and confusion.

Many pilgrims and spectators had climbed up the trees to overlook the rest. The meadows, the fields, the hills, every rising ground, all the rocks from whence a view could be obtained, were literally covered with an innumerable multitude. The soldiers and policemen paraded in the neighbourhood of this vast crowd, as well as in the adjoining roads; they ran hither and thither, and called to this person and that, in a state of anxiety and agitation. The vice-mayor, in his scarf of office, stood quietly contemplating the scene, while M. Jacomet and the Procureur Impérial were equally attentive to all that was going on, and in readiness to repress the least appearance of disorder.

Upwards of twenty thousand persons were spread along the banks of the Gave, and this multitude was continually increased by the arrivals of fresh pilgrims who came in on every side. Faith, prayer, curiosity, scepticism, were

depicted on their varied countenances. All classes, all ideas, all sentiments, were represented in this immense multitude.

The simple Christian of the early ages was there, who knew that nothing was impossible with God; the Christian tormented by doubts, and coming to these wild rocks to seek arguments for his tottering faith; the believing woman, asking of the holy Mother the cure of some dear sick one, or the conversion of some beloved soul; the sceptic, having eyes that see not, and ears that hear not; and the frivolous person, forgetful of his soul, and only in quest of some amusement, formed together a strange and unwonted spectacle. All these were to be found amongst that vast assemblage.

A widespread, vague, confused sound, came from the multitude, resembling the ceaseless tumult of the waves of the sea.

Suddenly the cry arose: "Here comes the saint! here comes the saint!"

Instinctively all heads were uncovered. Bernadette, accompanied by her mother, was seen on the path which the confraternity of stone-cutters had traced out on the preceding days, quietly descending towards this ocean of human beings. Although she had the vast assemblage before her eyes, and was doubtless glad to see such devoted homage paid to the marvellous Lady, her whole thoughts were concentrated on the happiness that awaited her in seeing this incomparable beauty once more. When heaven is about to open, who would look upon earth? She was so absorbed in the joyous expectation

that filled her heart, that the cries, "Here comes the saint!" did not seem to reach her ears. She was so full of the thought of the vision, so perfectly humble, that she had not even vanity enough to be confused and blush.

The gendarmes, however, hastened towards the child, forming an escort for her, and clearing a passage to the grotto. These brave fellows, as well as the soldiers, were believers, and their sympathetic attitude and religious demeanour had prevented the crowd from being irritated at the display of armed force, and thus deceived the calculations of the crafty. A deep silence reigned. There is not a moment during the holy Sacrifice of the Mass where greater recollection could have been observed. Even those who did not believe were filled with respect. Every one held his breath. Had a blind person been there, he would have been unconscious of the presence of the vast assemblage; and in the midst of the universal silence nothing would have struck his ears save the gushing waters of the Gave. Those who were near the grotto heard the murmur of the miraculous fountain as it ran peacefully into the little reservoir, by the conduit of wood lately placed to receive it.

When Bernadette knelt before the grotto, all the people, by one unanimous movement, fell upon their knees. Almost instantly afterwards the superhuman rays of ecstasy illuminated the transfigured features of the child. We need not again describe this marvellous spectacle, of which we have so frequently attempted to give the reader an idea. It was ever the same, yet

always changing, like the splendours of the rising sun. The powers of a poor writer are limited, and his ideas weak, and unable to treat of such high marvels. Though Jacob in his sleep wrestled with the angel, the artist in his infirmity cannot wrestle with God. And there are times when he finds himself unable to describe the work of God. This is what we now feel, and it must be left to those who read this work to picture to themselves the successive joys, emotions, and blissful feelings of wonder and delight which the glorious vision of the Virgin Immaculate, of that admirable beauty in which God Himself takes delight, impressed upon the heart, and also upon the innocent countenance of the enraptured Bernadette.

The apparition, as upon the preceding days, commanded the girl to go and drink, and wash herself at the fountain, and to eat of the herb by its side. She then again commanded her to go to the priests, and repeat her desire that a church should be raised on that spot, and that processions should be made to it.

The girl entreated the apparition to tell her name; but the radiant Lady did not reply to this question. The moment had not yet arrived. The Queen of Heaven wished to be known by her benefits. She intended that the grateful acclamations of every mouth should speak her name and glorify her, before she answered, saying: "Your hearts have not deceived you. It is I myself." "*Ego sum Mater.*"

XL.

However, the unbelieving philosophy of men being irritated by the very circumstances which they pretended to despise, and which they dared not submit to the test of a public inquiry, they endeavoured to throw discredit upon them by other means. They had recourse to a most profound and subtle manœuvre; instead of examining the true miracles, they invented false ones, which they proposed hereafter to unmask, and proclaim as open impostures. Their papers made no mention of Louis Bourriette, Blaise Maumus, Croisine Ducouts, nor the widow Crozat, nor Marie Daube, nor Bernard Soubie, nor Fabian Baron, nor the others. But they perfidiously fabricated an imaginary legend, which they intended to circulate widely by means of the press, and then to refute it at their ease.

" You must not be astonished," said the journal of the Prefecture, *l'Ere Impériale*, " if there are still to be found persons who persist in maintaining that the young girl is predestinated, and that she is endued with supernatural power. For these persons aver, first, that a dove hovered over the head of the child during the time that the ecstasy lasted. Secondly, that Bernadette breathed on the eyes of a little blind girl and restored her to sight. Thirdly, that she cured another infant whose arm was paralyzed. And fourthly, that a peasant of the valley of Campan,

having declared that he was not to be duped by these scenes of hallucination, the little girl had obtained, that same evening, that the sins of the peasant should be changed into serpents, which serpents had devoured him, and not a trace of the limbs of the irreverent man was to be found." In regard to the real cures, in regard to the miracles that had undoubtedly happened, as to the springing forth of the fountain, the clever editor took good care not to speak. With not less craft, he gave no name, to avoid being contradicted. "This is what we are come to, and we should not have come to this had the parents of the girl followed the advice of the physician who told them to send her to the hospital." It is observable that no physician had yet so advised. It was a trial balloon thrown out by a government journal. This appeared in the *Ere Impériale*, dated March 6th. After having invented these fables, the pious and judicious writer takes alarm, in the name of reason and of faith, and goes on to say: "This is the opinion of all *reasoning* persons, who entertain sentiments of *true piety*, who *respect* and *sincerely love religion*, who regard the mania of superstition as very dangerous, and whose principle it is not to admit to the rank of miracles any facts, except such as are created by the Church."

As to this reflection, we may say, in passing, the decision of the Church does not create the miracle; she pronounces on it. And on the authority of her examination, and her dictum, the faithful believe. But no law, neither in the

order of faith, nor in the order of reason, prevents Christians, witnesses of supernatural manifestations, from recognizing their miraculous character. The Church has never exacted from believers this abdication of their reason and of their common sense. She reserves the right of judging as a last resource, that is all.

The journal in question winds up the article thus: "It does not appear up to this moment that the ecclesiastical authorities have judged what has passed to be worthy of any serious attention."

The editor of the administrative journal, by this last remark, has unintentionally shown the truth of all that has been said as regards the clergy, namely, that they were absolute strangers to the occurrences, and that they had been, and were continuing to be, accomplished without their having anything to do with the matter. As to the other poor journal, the *Lavedan*, the journal of Lourdes, it was so crushed by the facts that it was altogether silent. This silence continued during several weeks. It said not a word about these unheard-of matters, and this concourse of people. One might have thought that this paper was printed at the other end of the world, if its columns had not been filled with articles borrowed here and there from public papers, and directed against superstition in general.

XLI.

Subsequently to the fifteenth day, Bernadette had returned several times to the grotto, but, somewhat like the rest of the world, that is to say, without hearing in herself the internal voice that irresistibly called her.

This voice she heard again on the morning of the 25th of March, and immediately took the road that led to the rocks of Massabielle. Her face was radiant with hope; she felt in herself that she was about to see again the apparition, and that before her charmed eyes paradise was about to open for an instant its eternal doors.

Bernadette, as we may well suppose, had become, in the town of Lourdes, the object of universal attention, and could not move without being the centre of observation.

"Bernadette is going to the grotto," said one to another, upon seeing her pass; and in an instant the people hastened from their houses, in the same direction, and arrived together with the child.

In the valley the snow had melted for two or three days, but still crowned the crest of the surrounding heights. The weather was bright and fair. Not a spot in the peaceful blue of the firmament. The kingly sun seemed at this moment to arise in the bosom of those white mountains, and cast a splendour over their mantle of snow.

It was the anniversary of the day on which

the Angel Gabriel descended to the most pure Virgin of Nazareth, and saluted her in the name of the Lord. The Church was celebrating the Feast of the Annunciation, while the multitude ran to the grotto, among whom were the healed Bourriette, Crozat, Soupenne, Cazeaux, Bordes, and twenty others. The Catholic Church, at the end of the morning office, chanted these wondrous words: "Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, the ears of the deaf shall hear, the lame shall leap as the hart, *because waters have risen in the desert, and torrents in the solitary place.*"

The joyous presentiment that Bernadette felt had not deceived her. The voice that called her was the voice of the Blessed Virgin. The moment the child fell on her knees, the apparition manifested itself. As on all former occasions, an ineffable aureole shone around her, whose splendours were indescribable, and its sweetness infinite. Covered with a veil, her robe, whiter than dazzling snow, fell in chaste folds around her. Two roses, full blown, were over her feet, their colour of that yellow tint seen low in the horizon at the first light of the virginal dawn. Her girdle was blue as the firmament.

Bernadette, in ecstasy, had forgotten earth, in looking on that spotless beauty. "O my Lady," said she, "will you have the goodness to tell me who you are, and what is your name?" The royal apparition smiled, but replied not. But at this very moment the universal Church, continuing the solemn prayers of her Office, cried: "Holy and Immaculate Virgin, what

praises can I give thee ? In truth I know not, for thou hast borne in thy womb Him whom the heavens cannot contain." Again Bernadette asked of the silent Vision : " O my Lady, will you have the goodness to tell me who you are, and what is your name ? " The apparition appeared still more radiant, as if her joy had increased, and yet replied not to the child's request. And the Church throughout all Christendom continued its prayers and chants, pronouncing these words : " Rejoice with me, all ye who love the Lord, because, being yet a child, the Most High loved me, and in my womb was conceived the God-Man. Generations will proclaim me ever blessed, because God has deigned to cast His regards upon His humble handmaiden, and I brought forth the Man-God Incarnate."

Bernadette, with increasing fervour, renewed her prayers, and repeated these words a third time : " O my Lady, will you have the goodness to tell me who you are, and what is your name ? "

The apparition seemed to become increasingly absorbed in her most blessed glory, and, as if concentrated in her happiness, she continued silent. But by a wonderful coincidence, the choirs of the universal Church at this hour chanted forth a song of joy, pronouncing the name of the marvellous apparition : " Hail, MARY, full of grace, the Lord is with thee ; blessed art thou amongst women."

Bernadette once more gave vent to these suppliant words : " O my Lady, I pray you, will

you have the goodness to tell me who you are, and what is your name?"

The apparition had her hands joined with fervour, and her face shone with the splendour of infinite beatitude. It was humility in glory. At the same moment that Bernadette contemplated the Vision, the Vision doubtless contemplated, in the bosom of the Divine Trinity, God the Father, of whom she is the Daughter; God the Son, of whom she is the Mother; and God the Holy Ghost, of whom she is the Spouse.

At the child's last question she opened her hands, wherein was glittering a rosary of beads of alabaster, threaded on gold. She then unfolded her arms, as if to show the earth her virginal hands full of benedictions. Then, raising them towards the eternal regions, from whence descended on the same day the divine messenger of the Annunciation, rejoined them with fervour, and looking up to heaven with an expression of unspeakable gratitude, pronounced these words :

"*Je suis l'Immaculée Conception.*"—"**I AM THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.**"

Having said these words she disappeared, and the child found herself, like the multitude, in the midst of a rocky desert. At her side the miraculous fountain fell into its rustic basin through a wooden trough, and the peaceful murmur of its waters was heard.

It was the day and the hour when the Church intoned in its Office the magnificent hymn,

"*O Gloriosa Virginum,
Sublimis inter sidera.*"

"*O Glorious of Virgins,
Sublime amid the stars.*"

XLII.

The Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ had not said: "I am Mary Immaculate." She had said: "I am the Immaculate Conception;" as if to mark the absolute character, the substantial character in some sort, of the divine privilege which she alone had had since Adam and Eve were created by God. It is as if she had said, not "I am pure," but, "I am purity itself;" not "I am a Virgin," but, "I am Virginity living and incarnate;" not "I am spotless," but "Spotlessness itself."

A thing that is white may cease to be so, but whiteness is always white; it is its essence, and not its quality.

Mary is more than conceived without sin, she is the Immaculate Conception itself; that is to say, the essential and superior type, the archetype of humanity itself without defilement, of humanity which has come from the hands of God without having been defiled by any original stain, by any impure element which the fault of our first parents introduced into the very source of that immense river of generations which is flowing for upwards of six thousand years, and of which each of us is a fugitive wave. When you desire from a polluted source to draw pure water, what do you do? You take a filter, and by means of it the water becomes disengaged from its grosser elements. You pass it through a second, and then through a third, and so on. Thus a moment comes when you have a vessel

of water perfectly pure and clear, a liquid diamond. Thus did God when the original source was troubled. He chose a family, and directed it in this world from age to age, from Seth to Noah, from Sem to David, from David to Joachim and Anne, the parents of the Blessed Virgin. And when this human blood was thus, so to speak, filtered, notwithstanding the accidents of some intermediary offenders, down through fifty generations of patriarchs and just, there came into the world, *by a special grace*, a creature absolutely pure, a creature without spot, a daughter of Adam entirely immaculate. Her name was Mary, and her fruitful virginity brought forth Jesus Christ.

The Blessed Virgin at the grotto of Lourdes chose to bear witness, by her presence, her miracles, and her words, to the dogma last defined by the Church, and proclaimed by St. Peter, speaking by the mouth of Pius IX.

The little shepherdess to whom the Blessed Virgin had deigned to appear, heard for the first time these words, "Immaculate Conception," and not comprehending them, made, on her way back to Lourdes, every effort in her power to retain them in her mind.

"I repeated to myself the words, 'Immaculate Conception' all the way, lest I should forget them," she said one day to the writer; "and until I got to the priest's house, where I was going, I said, 'Immaculate Conception,' 'Immaculate Conception,' because I wished to take to the parish priest the words of the vision, in order that the chapel might be built.

XLIII.

Easter Day arrived, and in spite of the pious apprehensions of the Minister of Public Worship, the wonders accomplished at Lourdes had not "weakened the religious feelings of the populations." Numberless conversions had taken place; the confessionals were besieged; the faithful pressed around the Holy Table; usurers and robbers had made restitution; and certain scandals had ceased.

Easter Monday, the 5th April, the same day on which the prefect visited the bishop, the Mother of God had renewed her interior call in the heart of the miller's daughter. The girl, quickly followed by a vast number of persons, arrived at the grotto, where, as on preceding occasions, the heavens were unclosed to her enraptured gaze, and she was permitted to see the Virgin Mary in her glory.

On this day, before the wondering eyes of the multitude, an astonishing spectacle presented itself. The candle that Bernadette carried was of a very large size. She had placed the end of it on the ground, while her hands, half closed, held it close to the lighted extremity. When the holy Virgin appeared, Bernadette, by an instinctive movement of homage, as she fell into an ecstasy before the Beauty Immaculate, raised her hands slightly upwards, resting them gently, and without thinking, on the top of the lighted taper, and the flame played through her fingers.

Bernadette remained motionless, absorbed in heavenly contemplation, and did not perceive the phenomenon that caused general astonishment around her. Witnesses pressed one on the other to observe more closely. Messrs. Jean Louis Fourcade, Martinou, Estrade, Callet, the ladies Tard'hivail, and a hundred other persons, were spectators of this extraordinary sight. M. Dozous, the physician already mentioned, declared that the flame continued to play through her fingers for more than a quarter of an hour. Suddenly a slight tremor was visible on the form of Bernadette. Her features changed; the Vision had ceased, and the girl returned to her natural state. Her hand was taken hold of, and nothing but what was usual was found upon it. The flame had respected the flesh of the child during her ecstasy before Mary. The crowd, not without reason, cried out: "A miracle!" One of the spectators, however, wishing to make sure of the matter, took the candle, which was still burning, and applied it to the hand of Bernadette. Instantly she drew it away, crying out: "Ah, sir, you burn me!"

The occurrences of Lourdes had caused such emotion throughout the country, that although they had no previous intimation, as during the first fortnight, of the expected presence of the Vision, a crowd of nearly ten thousand persons was collected on this occasion round Bernadette.

XLIV.

Bernadette was constantly visited by numerous strangers, whose piety or curiosity attracted them to Lourdes. They were from all classes, and of all professions. None found anything defective or self-contradictory in her simple and candid speech; none, after having seen and heard the spectator of the Vision, dared to say that she had uttered a falsehood. In the midst of excited parties and numberless discussions, this child, by an inconceivable privilege, inspired all with respect, and was never an object of calumny. The lustre of her innocence was such that she was never accused or attacked, an invisible arm protected her. Of an intelligence which was very ordinary in common matters, Bernadette was above herself on every occasion that she had to give testimony to the Vision. No objection put her out. When questioned on the subject, she was always prepared with an answer. On one occasion M. De Rasséquier, counsellor of the Court of Pau, and formerly deputy for the Basses Pyrénées, went to see her, accompanied by several ladies of his family. He made her describe, in very great detail, the circumstances relating to the apparitions.

When Bernadette said that the apparition expressed herself in *patois Béarnais*, he exclaimed: "You do not tell me the truth, my child; the good God and the holy Virgin neither speak

nor understand your *patois*; they know nothing of that barbarous language."

"If they do not know it, sir," she replied, "how do we know it ourselves? And if they do not comprehend it, who has made us able to understand it?"

She had also witty repartees. "How is it that the holy Virgin could have ordered you to eat grass? Does she then take you for a beast?" said a sceptic one day to her.

Looking at her interrogator with a smile, she answered: "Do you think that you are one yourself when you eat salad?"

She had her naïve replies also. This same M. De Rasséquier spoke to her of the beauty of the apparition of the grotto. "Was she as handsome as the ladies you see here?" he asked.

Bernadette cast a glance around the charming circle of young ladies who had accompanied the visitor; then, with a disdainful glance, said: "Oh, she was very different from anything of that sort!"—"Anything of that sort" were amongst the *elite* of Pau.

She disconcerted subtle persons who sought to embarrass her. "If the parish priest were formally to forbid your going to the grotto, what would you do?" some one asked of her.

"I should obey him."

"But if you received at the same time from the apparition an order to go, what would you do between these two conflicting orders?"

The girl at once, and without the slightest hesitation, replied: "I should immediately go to the parish priest, and ask his permission."

Nothing, either at this period or later, caused her to lose this sweet and graceful simplicity. Never, unless interrogated, did she speak of the apparition. She always considered herself the last and the lowest of the children in the sisters' school. They had some trouble to teach her to read and write. The soul of this child was elsewhere, and if we could dare to penetrate into her interior nature, so exquisite, and visited by grace, we should perhaps venture to say that her soul, little curious doubtless in human affairs, was playing truant in the groves of paradise.

During the hours of recreation she mixed with her companions, and loved to play with them. Sometimes a visitor or stranger from a distance asked the sisters' permission to see this seer of the Vision, this privileged of the Lord, this well-beloved of the holy Virgin, this Bernadette, whose name was even then so celebrated. "There she is," a sister would say, pointing her out amongst a group of children. The visitor would see a little girl, slight, and poorly clad, playing at some of the various innocent games of childhood. But what she preferred to all was to make the thirtieth or fortieth in one of those immense rounds in which children delight, singing and holding each other by the hand.

When the blessed Mother of God visited Bernadette, and chose her to bear testimony to divine and heavenly occurrences, when she made her the centre of interest to multitudes of people, who performed pilgrimages, one may almost say, in order to see and converse with

her, she provided for the preservation of her simplicity and candour by a miracle greater than all the rest, and bestowed upon her a wonderful gift, even the privilege of continuing always a child, the privilege of retaining her child-like heart and disposition to the end of her life.

XLV.

In the course of the months of March and April, before and after the letter to the minister,* the prefect endeavoured to discover the key to these strange occurrences at Lourdes. The interrogatories, renewed by the lawyers and M. Jacomet, had been useless. Neither the commissary of police nor M. Dutour were able to discover any delinquency in the child. This little girl of thirteen or fourteen years of age, ignorant, not knowing how to read or write, or even to speak French, disconcerted all the efforts of her most clever and adroit interrogators, by her profound simplicity. A disciple of Mesmer and of Du Potet, who appeared on the scene, no one knew how, had in vain attempted to put Bernadette into a magnetic sleep. His passes failed of their effect upon her calm and tranquil temperament; they only resulted in giving the child a bad headache. She endured all these examinations and experi-

* See in "Our Lady of Lourdes," the account of the opposition raised by M. Rouland, Minister of Public Worship, as well as by the prefect, to the religious movement caused by the events at Lourdes.

ments in the most resigned manner. It was the will of God that she should be exposed to every kind of test, and come triumphant from them all.

We have heard that a very rich family were so charmed with the little Bernadette, that they offered to adopt her, offering a fortune of a hundred thousand francs to her parents, with the option of living close to their child. These disinterested and noble people were not even tempted by this; their choice was to remain poor.

It was now evident that all the deep-laid plans, sagacious attempts, and disputatious reasonings of the freethinkers, had completely failed. Notwithstanding his horror of fanaticism, the Procureur Impérial, M. Dutour, could not find, either in the code of criminal instruction, or in the penal code, any law enabling him to take severe measures against Bernadette, and to imprison her. To arrest her would have been illegal, and the chief magistrate who ordered it would have subjected himself to disagreeable consequences. In the eyes of the penal law Bernadette was innocent. M. the prefect then thought of another mode to solve the difficulty.

XLVI.

The laws of France empower the magistrate to seize and put in confinement persons supposed to be insane, provided a certificate to this effect be obtained from two respectable physi-

cians. The medical body is in general composed of honourable men, still this terrible power is liable to abuse. On learning that the Blessed Virgin had appeared anew to Bernadette, and that she had told the girl her name, the *préfet* sent a commission to the house of the Soubirous, consisting of two physicians of the place, who were as much opposed to the supernatural as the *préfet* himself, one of them being, moreover, his particular friend. These gentlemen examined the girl, but could not discover in her any tendency to insanity. Her answers to the several questions put to her were sensible, consistent, and devoid of peculiarity. And there was no undue excitement in her nervous system, but, on the contrary, an unusual calmness of temperament. Asthma frequently affected the girl's chest, but this infirmity had no connection whatever with derangement of the brain. These two physicians, in spite of their preconceived opinions, gave in their report to the effect that the girl was in perfect health, save that she was subject to asthma. But, as upon the question of the apparitions she steadily persisted in the same unvarying recital, these gentlemen, who could not believe in the possibility of such visions, declared that she might probably be in a *state of hallucination*. Still they dared not state positively, notwithstanding their anti-supernatural ideas, that she was a case for confinement. However, the *préfet* was determined to act upon this report, and make out a more affirmative formula. Thus armed, and in virtue of the law of the 30th June, 1838, he resolved to have Bernadette

arrested and conducted to Tarbes, at first to be placed in a hospital, and afterwards, no doubt, in a lunatic asylum.

But it was not deemed sufficient to strike this blow at the child, it was necessary to put a stop to the extraordinary movement among the people. M. Rouland, the minister of public worship, had insinuated, in his letter to the *préfet*, that it was possible to do this without overstepping the bounds of the law. For this purpose it was only necessary to consider the grotto as having been turned into an oratory, and thus power was given to carry off the votive offerings of the faithful. If resistance were made by them, a squadron of cavalry would be held in readiness to be sent, at a moment's notice, from Tarbes.

Matters were thus arranged, by prefectoral infallibility, against Bernadette and against the people, in order to ward off the increasing invasion of superstition.

XLVII.

The *préfet*, M. Massy, had, at this juncture, occasion to go to Lourdes, where there was to be a general meeting of all the mayors of the canton. After having arranged the matters of business relating to the conscription, M. Massy addressed the meeting on the subject of the apparitions.

The journal of the prefecture, the *Ere Impérial*, on the following day gave an account of

the proceedings, as also the speech of the *préfet* on the subject of the apparitions, a part of which was as follows :

"My sentiments," said this devout functionary, "are above suspicion. Every one in the department knows my profound respect for religion. I have given, I think, sufficient proofs of this to prevent the possibility of my intentions being misinterpreted.

"You will not then be surprised to learn, gentlemen, that I have given an order to the commissary of police to carry off, and convey to the mayoralty, where they will be left at the disposal of the owners, the articles at present placed in the grotto.

"I have also given orders that those said to be visionaries shall be arrested and conducted to Tarbes, to be treated as *insane persons*, at the expense of the department.

"I have further directed, that all those who have contributed to circulate these absurd reports now current throughout the country, shall be prosecuted, under the act forbidding the propagation of *false intelligence*."

This occurred on the fourth of May, and it was in this manner that this very religious *préfet* inaugurated his month of Mary.

These words were received with *unanimous enthusiasm*, according to the journal of the *préfecture*. The truth is, that the one party highly disapproved of the violent course which authority was adopting, while others, belonging to the sect of the freethinkers, imagined that the hand

of the prefect would be enough to put a rough spoke in the irresistible march of events.

Immediately after the delivery of this address to the meeting, the prefect of the department quitted the town, having taken measures to have his orders put into execution.

The mayor and the commissary of police were ordered to carry out the designs of the prefect. The first had orders to arrest Bernadette, the latter to go to the rocks of Massabielle, and despoil the grotto of all that the piety of the faithful had deposited in that place. Thus a blow was simultaneously aimed both at the cause and the effect.

We shall follow both in their turn, commencing with the mayor.

XLVIII.

We have seen that M. Lacadé, mayor of Lourdes, refrained from pronouncing on the extraordinary events passing in that place. He was, in fact, strongly impressed by them, and it was not without a certain amount of misgiving that he saw the administration enter upon these violent courses. He was greatly perplexed. He knew not what attitude the people would assume. It is true that the prefect had announced that a squadron of cavalry should be kept in readiness, to maintain the tranquillity of the town of Lourdes, but even this did not allay his apprehensions. To sustain his courage he had recourse to the Procureur Impérial, M. Du-

tour, and both together went to the house of the parish priest of Lourdes, to communicate to him the order of arrest emanating from the prefecture. They explained to the Abbé Peyramale how, according to the law of the 30th of June, 1838, the prefect acted in the full plenitude of his legal powers.

The priest could not contain his indignation, upon being told of this cruel and iniquitous measure.

"The girl is innocent," cried he, "and the proof is, Monsieur le Procureur Impérial, that as a magistrate, you have not been able, in spite of all sorts of questions, to find a pretext of any kind enabling you to act against her. You know that there is not a tribunal in France that would not acknowledge her innocence, and that there is not a Procureur General who, under such circumstances, would not declare this proceeding to be monstrous, and would positively refuse to arrest her."

"It is not I who take action in this case," replied M. Dutour, "it is the prefect, who, upon the report of the physicians, is about to shut up the girl in consequence of the deranged state of her mind; it is for her own good, in order that a cure may be effected. It is a simple administrative measure that does not in the least touch on religion, since neither the Bishops nor the clergy have pronounced upon these facts passing around them."

"Such a measure," replied the priest, becoming more and more animated, "would be the most odious of persecutions. All the more

odious, that it assumes a hypocritical mask, that it affects a wish to protect, and conceals under the cloak of legality the intention of striking a defenceless being. If the bishop and the clergy, if I myself, have awaited a clearer light to enable us to pronounce on the supernatural character of these occurrences, we already know sufficient to judge of the sincerity of Bernadette, and the soundness of her intellectual faculties. And when they do not affirm any cerebral injury, in what should your two physicians be more competent to judge of the state of folly or good sense than any one of the thousand visitors who have questioned this child, and all of whom have admired the full clearness and the upright character of her understanding? And your physicians themselves have not dared to affirm her insanity, and conclude it only from their own hypothesis. The prefect cannot, under any circumstances, arrest Bernadette."

"It is legal," said M. Dutour.

"It is illegal! As pastor of Lourdes, I owe a duty to all, and particularly to the feeble. If I were to see an armed man attacking a child, I should defend that child at the peril of my life, for I know that the duty of protection is incumbent on a good shepherd of his flock. Know, then, that I should act in the same manner were this man even the prefect himself. Go, therefore, and tell him that his gendarmes shall find me on the threshold of the door of this poor family, and they will have to pass over my body ere they touch a hair of the head of this little girl."

"But nevertheless—"

"There is no nevertheless in the matter," interrupted the priest; "examine, make your inquiries; you are free to do so. But if you intend to persecute, if you intend to strike the innocent, know well, that before attempting anything against the least—the very least—among my flock, you will have to commence with myself."

The priest had risen from his chair. His lofty stature, his powerful features, lit up with the plenitude of strength, his resolute gestures, his face glowing with emotion, caused the procureur and the mayor to listen in silence.

At length they spoke of the measures relative to the grotto.

"As for the grotto," replied the priest, "if the prefect wishes, in the name of the law, and in accordance with his private piety, to despoil it of the objects which the innumerable visitors have deposited there in honour of the holy Virgin, let him do it. The faithful will be saddened, and even indignant. But he may set his mind at rest; the inhabitants of this country know how to respect authority, even when that authority is in the wrong. I am told that at Tarbes a squadron of cavalry is in the saddle, ready to rush to Lourdes upon a signal from the prefect. Let the squadron dismount. However ardent may be the heads of the people, however wounded may be their hearts, at the sound of my voice, I will answer for it, that my people will be tranquil without the aid of armed force. In the presence of an armed force I will not answer for their tranquillity."

XLIX.

The energetic attitude of the Curé of Lourdes, whom they knew to be incapable of yielding in anything that he considered to be his duty, introduced into the question an unforeseen element, although one which might easily have been anticipated.

The Procureur Impérial, as soon as the matter took an administrative turn, had ceased to interfere, and it was only as a friend that he had accompanied M. Lacadé to the priest's house. All the weight, therefore, of decision fell upon the latter.

M.^r Lacadé felt convinced that the Curé of Lourdes would undoubtedly keep his word. As to acting by surprise, and suddenly arresting Bernadette unawares to the pastor, that was a thing not to be thought of, now that the Abbé Peyramale was made aware of it, and would be on the watch. We have already said how strongly the mayor was impressed by being suddenly brought face to face with supernatural events. The unimpassioned exterior of the magistrate concealed an anxious and agitated mind.

The mayor informed the prefect of the conversation which he and M. Dutour had had with the parish priest of Lourdes. The arrest of Bernadette, he moreover added, might, in the present excited state of people's minds, raise the town, and provoke an unpleasant revolt against

constituted authority. As for himself, in face of the determination so formally expressed by the Curé, and in presence of such extraordinary facts, he felt himself, to his great regret, obliged to refuse to act, were he in so doing to resign his office of mayor. It was for the prefect, if he thought fit, to give with his own lips the order to the gendarmes for the arrest.

Whilst the fate and liberty of Bernadette were thus in jeopardy, M. Jacomet, in full uniform, wearing his scarf of office, prepared to execute the order of M. Massy, at the rocks of Massabielle. The readers of "*Our Lady of Lourdes*" know what took place there.

L.

The prefect was but slightly affected by these incidents. The bold and inflexible attitude of the Abbé Peyramale occupied his mind far more than the marks of celestial displeasure or power. God, in a word, gave him less uneasiness than the Curé. The refusal of the mayor, M. Lacadé, to proceed, his proffered resignation, (a circumstance very unusual on the part of a functionary,) added to the discontent manifested at the removal of the votive offerings from the grotto, the uncertainty as to a passive obedience in the gendarmes and soldiery, who participated fully in the popular enthusiasm and veneration,—all these things caused him to reflect, and he felt that under these circumstances the incarceration of the visionary might produce the most disas-

trous consequences. Not that he was unprepared to brave an *emeute*, but a rising of the population, accompanied by the resignation of the mayor, complicated by the intervention of one of the most respected priests of the diocese, and followed probably by a complaint to the Council of State, and by an energetic protest of the Catholic or independent press, presented to his mind a serious character, which could not fail to have an effect upon a man so intelligent, and so attached to his functions, as the Baron Massy.

It must however have cost the haughty prefect much to have to stop in the execution of that radical measure which he had so publicly announced the day before to the Council of Revision, and certainly he would not have acted as he did if the report of the physicians, instead of being a simple and hesitating hypothesis, of itself insecure, had attested the insanity of the visionary. But M. Massy, after all the examinations of Bernadette, was fully aware that there could not be found one serious physician who did not, with all the world, acknowledge the perfect reason, the upright intelligence, and good faith of the child.

But must he, after all such evidence, resign himself to this popular superstition? By no means: he would change his tactics; he felt he had gone too far to recede; he had carried off from the rocks of Massabielle the votive offerings of the people, and to revoke this measure was not to be thought of for a moment.

He deemed it advisable, however, to allow the

visionary to remain free; the idea of her arrest was consequently abandoned.

The civil authority, by this abortive attempt, which was never repeated, itself testified to the utter impossibility of showing the mental faculties of Bernadette to be affected in the slightest degree, and thus only succeeded in hurting itself with its own weapons.

LI.

In the midst of these different passions and multiplied calculations, the world did not fail to tempt Bernadette with new trials as useless as the foregoing.

She was preparing for her first communion, and made it on the third of June, the feast of Corpus Christi. It was the very day on which the municipal council of Lourdes gave Monsieur Filhol the commission to analyze the mysterious fountain that had recently sprung up under her hand.

In spite of the retirement which she sought, people continued to visit her. She was always the innocent and simple child of whom we have endeavoured to trace the portrait. By her candour, by her perfect good faith, by the delicate perfume of her peaceful holiness, she charmed all who came near her.

One day, a lady, after conversing with her, desired, in a moment of enthusiastic veneration, easily to be conceived by those who have known Bernadette, to exchange her rosary of precious stones for that of the child.

"Keep yours, madame," replied she, showing her poor beads; "here is mine: I do not wish to change it. It is poor, like myself, and suits my indigence better."

An ecclesiastic tried to make her accept a piece of money. She refused: he insisted. A new refusal, so formal that any further pressure appeared useless. He, however, did not hold himself beaten. "Take it," he said, "it will not be for you, it will be for the poor, and you will have the pleasure of bestowing an alms."

"Do it with your own hands for my intention, Monsieur l'Abbé, and it will be better than if I did it myself," replied the child.

Poor Bernadette chose to serve God gratuitously, and to fill, without quitting her noble poverty, the mission which she had received from on high. And nevertheless she and her family sometimes wanted bread.

LII.

Towards the end of the month of May, Bernadette, exhausted by her asthma, fatigued without doubt also by so many visitors, who wanted to see and hear her, fell ill.

In his strong desire to calm the minds of the people, and to remove all cause of agitation, Monseigneur profited by this circumstance to advise the parents to send Bernadette to the waters of Cauterets, which are in the neighbourhood of Lourdes. It was an expedient to withdraw her from those dialogues, inquiries,

and narratives of the apparition, of which all the world was to hear an account, and which kept up the popular emotion. The Soubirous, uneasy at the state of Bernadette, and finding, on their part, that these perpetual visits were wearing her out, confided her to an aunt, who was going to Cauterets, and who took on herself the little expenses of their journey, which did not amount to very much at this period of the year, when the springs were still almost deserted.

The privileged classes and the rich came a little later, and there were few at Cauterets during the month of June, save some poor people from the Montagne. Unwell, seeking for silence and repose, striving to get out of the way as much as possible from public curiosity, Bernadette took the waters there for two or three weeks.

As June was drawing near to its close, the great period for the waters of the Pyrenees was commencing, and she returned home to her parents at Lourdes.

LIII.

On the 16th of July, the Feast of our Lady of Mount Carmel, Bernadette heard the secret voice that had been silent within her for some months, and which called her, no longer to the Massabielle rocks, then shut up,* but on the

* See, in "Our Lady of Lourdes," the account of the grotto being closed with barriers by the mayor, of the placing of guards to hinder any one from going to it, and the summonses and fines of those who went, notwithstanding.

right bank of the Gave, in those meadows where the crowd was praying, that they might be sheltered from the legal proceedings and vexations of the police.

It was eight o'clock in the evening. Scarcely had the girl knelt down and commenced the rosary, than the ever-blessed Mother of Jesus Christ appeared to her. The Gave, which separated her from the grotto, had disappeared to the eyes of the ecstatic. She did not see anything before her but the blessed rock, which seemed to be as near to her as on former occasions. The Immaculate Virgin smiled sweetly upon her, as if to confirm all that had passed, and illuminate the future. No words issued from her heavenly lips. At a particular moment she bowed her head towards the child, as if to say a very long farewell, or a final adieu. Then she disappeared, and returned to the heavens. It was the eighteenth apparition, and the last.

LIV.

On the 17th of November, the commission of inquiry nominated by the Bishop arrived at Lourdes. Bernadette was examined. "She presented herself before us," writes the secretary in the procès-verbal, "with remarkable modesty and self-possession. She was calm and unembarrassed in the midst of the numerous assembly of venerable ecclesiastics whom she had not before seen, but of whose mission she had been apprized."

The young girl related the apparitions, the words of the Blessed Virgin, the order given by her to construct on that spot a chapel to her honour, the sudden bursting out of the fountain, the name,—“Immaculate Conception,”—that the Vision had given herself. She exposed, with the grave certainty of a witness who was sure of herself, and the humble candour of a child, all that was personal to herself in this supernatural drama, which had been going on for nearly a year. She replied to every question, leaving no obscurity in the minds of those who interrogated her,—not now in the name of men like Jacomet, the procureur, and many others, but in the name of the Catholic Church, the eternal spouse of God. All that to which she gave testimony our readers know. We have given the events, according to their date, in different pages of this narrative.

LV.

Six years passed away. All opposition had been powerless against the work of the Mother of God. The bishop, in a solemn charge, had declared the reality of the apparitions and miracles, and the basilica above the sacred grotto was being built.

Occasionally, at the time when there were fewest people at the rocks of Massabielle, a little girl came humbly to kneel there and drink at the fountain. She was a child of the people, and poorly clothed. Nothing distinguished her

from others, and unless she happened to be known to one of the pilgrims, who might point her out to the rest, none could divine that this was Bernadette. The privileged of the Lord had retired into shade and silence. She continued to attend the Sisters' school, where she was the simplest of all, and would willingly have been ignored. The numberless visits she received did not disturb her peace of mind, before which she had ever present the thought of heaven, and the remembrance of the incomparable Virgin. Bernadette preserved these things in her heart. Like the saintly priest of Lourdes, she too looked forward, as to the happiest of days, to that on which she should see the priests of God themselves lead the faithful, with the cross in front and banners unfolded, to the rock of the apparition.

On the 4th of April, 1864, the Church took solemn possession of this spot, for ever sacred, by the inauguration of a statue of the holy Virgin, in fine Carrara marble, placed, with all the usual pomp in such cases, in a rustic niche, above the grotto where the Mother of God had appeared to a daughter of men. The concourse of people that came to witness this grand festival of earth and heaven was immense. A procession, such as was never known in the memory of man, set out from the church at Lourdes to the grotto. At its head marched the troops, decked in all the brilliancy of military splendour; following these came the confraternities of Lourdes, and corporations from neighbouring departments, carrying their cross and banners;

next were the Congregation of the Children of Mary, dressed in white; the Sisters of Nevers, in their long black veils; the Sisters of Charity; the Sisters of St. Joseph; the Religious Orders of men, the Carmes, Christian Brothers, &c.; a prodigious multitude of pilgrims,—men, women, and children,—to the number of from fifty to sixty thousand, in two interminable files, extended along the flowery road that led to the illustrious rocks of Massabielle. From time to time the popular enthusiasm burst forth in a chorus of voices and musical instruments. Closing the procession, and surrounded by four hundred priests, with the dignitaries and Chapter of his cathedral church, came Monseigneur Bertrand Sévère Laurence, Bishop of Tarbes, in his mitre and pontifical robes, with one hand blessing the people, while the other rested on his crosier.

On this day of solemn triumph the venerated Curé of Lourdes lay on his bed of suffering, attacked by, it was thought, a mortal illness. As the procession went by he attempted to rise, but his strength failed, and he had not even a passing view of this longed-for spectacle. Bernadette was also absent, from illness. In sending her this trial, God gave her a proof of His predilection; and, to hinder any temptation to vain-glory, withdrew her from the scene where her name was repeated amidst the acclamations of thousands, and where she would have heard her eulogy from the lips of preachers in ardent addresses from the pulpit. As her parents were too indigent to have her

properly tended at home, she had been removed to the hospital, where she lay on a humble pallet, at the charity of the public, amidst those poor whom this passing world would term unfortunate, but whom Jesus Christ has blessed, declaring them to be the inheritors of His eternal kingdom.

LVI.

After eleven years had elapsed since the apparitions of the most holy Virgin, the vast temple was nearly completed, and for a long time the Holy Sacrifice had been celebrated at all the altars of the subterranean crypt. Close by was established a house for the missionary priests, appointed by the bishop to preach the word of God, and dispense the sacraments to the pilgrims. These last have increased in numbers to an extent perhaps hitherto unexampled.

The Abbé Peyramale recovered from the dangerous malady already mentioned. He remained until the end of his life the venerated pastor of this Christian town of Lourdes, where his power for good is marked in indelible traces.

Louise Soubirous, mother of Bernadette, died the 8th of December, 1866, the feast of the Immaculate Conception. While millions of francs have been given to complete the church above the grotto, the miller Soubirous is still a poor and hard-working man. His daughter Maria, who was with Bernadette when the first appari-

tion appeared, has married a good peasant, a miller, who works with his father-in-law. The other companion of the child, Jeanne Abadie, is a servant at Bordeaux.

The Almighty has never ceased to shed forth graces and favours in the place where the Queen of Heaven appeared, and where frequent miracles continue to show forth the divine power in an unbelieving age.

BERNADETTE.

BOOK II.

THE TESTIMONY.

I.

Bernadette, having quitted all that it is possible to give up in the vale of human existence, and her public mission being finished, had entered that vestibule of heaven called the Religious Life. In this garden of the Lord, for the space of twelve years, her virtues were to develope and expand.

Here we shall shortly find her, the delight and edification of her companions. On the last day that she was upon earth, the doors of the cloister opened, and our readers, entering them with us, will also breathe the secret sweetness of the "garden enclosed."

But it will first be necessary briefly to mention events which have been taking place without, during the course of these twelve years. The person of Bernadette is, besides, too closely connected with the history of our Lady of Lourdes, even when she appears to be no longer

on the scene, to allow of its being possible to separate her from it entirely.

These twelve years, as we know, have been terrible years for the Church and for the world, laden with distressing events and sanguinary catastrophes: religious persecution throughout the greater part of Europe; violation of the pontifical patrimony; captivity and death of Pius IX.; accession of Leo XIII. in similar captivity; might constituting right; and, for France, invasion and a disastrous war, overthrow of the second empire, dismemberment of territory, crimes of the Commune, assassination of the hostages, murder of the archbishop, and immolation of priests, fearful civil disorders, and the country torn by discord. What accumulated ruins and sombre memories, during the space of these twelve years!

And yet, at the same time, in the midst of all these trials, faith, hope, and love have all been evidently increased in the hearts of Christ's children. Pilgrimages have reappeared on the face of the globe, traversing lands and oceans, and, thanks to the power of steam, taking a character and proportion unknown to any former age or nation. The "City of God," it might almost be said, has also had her crisis, her great movement, towards the Immaculate Virgin who appeared at the grotto of Lourdes, and a day came, when, amidst the most numerous assemblage of bishops that had for five centuries taken place in France,* the Sovereign

* The largest assembly of prelates in France, since the Council of Lyons, in 1811, was the famous one of 1682, which took

Pontiff of the Church crowned, by the hands of his legate, the statue of our Lady of Lourdes, as the image of the Queen of Heaven.

Having related Bernadette's share in the origin of this religious event, and the admirable manner in which the Curé Peyramale fulfilled his mission, may it be permitted us to say also that God, who makes use of what He will, and is pleased to manifest His glory by the very importance of the instruments He chooses, has deigned to bless, beyond all measure, a humble book of His most unworthy servant, and to employ it to spread throughout the world the good news of the apparitions of Mary, and the welling forth of the miraculous spring.

This book, being a history, itself belongs to history. Overcoming, therefore, for reasons known to God, a certain scruple or hesitation we at first felt, we shall speak of it with the same liberty and simplicity as if it were altogether foreign to ourselves, and as if the author, some person unknown to us, had been dead fifty years. What part Bernadette had in this book, and what were her relations with the writer, we are about to show, by printing here for the public a portion of our private memoranda.

place by order of King Louis XIV., and numbered thirty-four bishops and archbishops. On the 3rd of July, 1876, thirty-five spontaneously assembled at Lourdes for the coronation.

II.

As my readers are aware, I was suffering, in 1862, from weakness of sight, to such an extent as to be absolutely unable to read or write. Without any hope, humanly speaking, of cure, and on the advice of a Protestant friend, I had recourse to our Lady of Lourdes, of whom, nevertheless, I knew nothing at that time, except through the impertinences of certain malevolent journals, and in whom I had the most hesitating and doubtful belief. I dictated to my friend, for the Curé of the parish of Lourdes,—a priest of whose name I was ignorant,—a letter, which he wrote and I signed, and in which I asked for a bottle of the water of Lourdes. This reached me on Friday, the 10th of October, 1862. Scarcely had this miraculous water bathed my eyes, when my malady suddenly disappeared, and my sight was restored in all its strength and clearness. This extraordinary fact took place at Paris.*

I informed M. Peyramale of my cure, relating to him how it took place. It appears that he was greatly moved by the account, and while

* The letter to the Curé of Lourdes, written by my friend, and signed by myself, was found among the papers of Mgr. Peyramale, and returned to me after his death. This testimony to the miracle is so much the more undeniable, since, in consequence of subsequent events in France, the friend of whom I speak, and who belongs to a party which is by no means my own, has been raised to the highest functions of the State. I have also the former letter, in which, on account of the infirmity of my sight, he advises me to have recourse to our Lady of Lourdes. Strange are the ways in which we are met by Providence!

under the impression of this emotion, had a sort of presentiment or intuition of the future. Going, on that day or the next, to the hospice at Lourdes, to the good Sisters of Nevers, who there tend the sick, and have a school for children, he read to them the pages he had received from me.

When he had finished reading, he said, in his grave and firm voice, these words, which struck them at the time, and which have often been repeated since by those who took pleasure in bearing witness to having heard them: "This man will be the historian of our Lady of Lourdes. For this the Blessed Virgin has cured him. She has chosen him for this."

And so in fact it was to be. Having, in her sovereign equity, chosen Bernadette, because of her complete innocence, as the one to whom she would appear, and the Abbé Peyramale as the human founder of the work, because of his heroic virtue, she had, in her unspeakable clemency, cast a look in the opposite extremity on the ocean of the world, and pointed me out to write this history, doubtless to show, from my numberless faults, that if she is the Queen of Saints, she is none the less the Mother of the weak and failing, calling alike the just and the sinner to a share in her favours.

In 1863 I went to Lourdes for the sole purpose of thanking her who, by a supernatural act of her power and goodness, had cured me. I made the personal acquaintance of the Curé of

the apparitions, and conversed several times and for long together with Bernadette, collecting with religious care the smallest details of her narrations. Desirous of forgetting nothing, I even noted down all her answers to my questions,—questions which made my heart thrill even in asking them, eager as I was to discover here below something of the glories of heaven, and the workings of God.

On his side, the Curé Peyramale, who, next to Bernadette, had been the great workman of our Lady, related to me various episodes of the divine drama which had been unfolded at Lourdes. These long and repeated conversations gradually gave me the idea, though as yet a vague one, of a thorough and detailed history of these marvellous events, of which the brief notice I had read presented merely a general outline.*

In the shadow of the grotto, by the side of the spring, and before the deserted excavation in which the Blessed Virgin had stood, I then formed the project, (not, however, pronouncing any vow to that effect,) of writing this supernatural history, the grace of God permitting.

When I imparted my design to the Abbé Peyramale, who ever since my cure, nearly a year before, had believed me to be called to this work, he replied: "It is the voice of Mary which has spoken to you."

* "L'Apparition à la Grotte de Lourdes, en 1868. Notice Redigée par M. l'Abbé Fourcade, secrétaire général de l'Evêché, secrétaire de la Commission de l'Enquête."

Mgr. Laurence, Bishop of the diocese, gave me access to the archives of the episcopal palace, and communicated to me the minutes of the commission of inquiry, the medical reports, and the correspondence on the subject, even having the kindness to entrust them to my keeping. "The whole history is in these papers," said the Bishop, as he handed me the documents; "we shall be very glad if you can draw it out from them."

Neither he, nor I, nor any one, except the Curé of Lourdes, whom we taxed with exaggeration in his prognostics, foresaw the extraordinary diffusion which Providence would give this, as yet, unwritten book, about which we were speaking.

III.

At Lourdes I had been vividly impressed. Returned to Paris, and again plunged in the world, I blush to own that by degrees my impression wore off. The grace of God is easily wasted by certain weak and vacillating souls, and I was,—alas! I am still,—one of this number.

The Blessed Virgin, who had cured my eyes, who had touched my heart, had not changed the ground-work of my feeble and sinful nature. I amused myself, travelled, went to Rome, did not resist the encroachments of other accessory and secondary works, and left in the back-ground

this principal and essential one.* I was ungrateful; almost forgetful of the benefit, and consequently of my gratitude for it.

Having made the mistake of not setting to work at once, I deferred from week to week, then from month to month, and at last from year to year, the execution of my project.

From time to time a letter from the Curé of Lourdes came to awaken my remorse, which, however, soon went to sleep again, and my negligence, with many other miseries, took deeper root within me.

Thus four years slipped away.

One evening, about the beginning of August, 1867, I wished to make my confession. It was not the day on which the venerable Abbé Ferrand de Missol, to whom I habitually addressed myself, was at home. In the course of my walk, therefore, I turned by chance into a little chapel in the Rue Duguay-Trouin. I asked for a priest, and went into the shade of the confessional to wait for him. Night was coming on.

In another moment the priest arrived.

We were unknown to each other, and even could he, in spite of the darkness, have distinguished my face and features, he would not have known my name or who I was.

After I had accused myself of my faults, I added: "Every sin that I commit is so much

* It was during this time that I wrote *L'Evangile selon Renan*; *l'Auteur du Maudit*; *la Pologne et la Catholicité*; and that I founded the *Contemporain*, (a periodical review.)

the more serious, from the fact that I was once the object of a remarkable and miraculous favour on the part of the Blessed Virgin."

"What was that?" he asked.

"My eyes were affected in such a manner that I could neither read nor write. Our Lady of Lourdes restored my eyes completely and instantaneously, and when, a year after my cure, I went to the grotto, I even made a resolution, though not a vow, to write an account of the events which gave rise to the pilgrimage of Lourdes."

I had scarcely said these words when the priest interrupted me, and said, in a voice, the sovereign authority of which I shall never forget: "Set to work upon it."

"Certainly, father, I will do so later; but for a few months I cannot."

"Immediately!"

"But indeed—"

"When you leave the confessional."

"And yet—"

"I command you."

Nothing can convey an idea of the ascendancy of these words, which had not only a tone of inexpressible authority, but a secret power that was absolutely irresistible. Let it be borne in mind that, as I have said, this priest did not in the least know who or what the penitent was who knelt on the other side of the grating; that he had never seen me, and was not in any way aware if I was, or could become a writer. He knew nothing of me but my faults, and these were certainly not of a nature to lead him to

suppose in me any particular qualification for writing an account of so august and sacred a character. It seemed to me that it was not he who spoke, but the voice of heaven itself. I bowed my head, therefore, to this command, and answered : "I will obey."

And I did obey. On returning home, I opened the dusty bundle of papers which had been confided to me four years previously by the Bishop of Tarbes.

The priest who had thus spoken to me was the Reverend Père Ratisbonne.*

IV.

From this day,—a greater day for me than that of my physical cure,—the ground of life was in some sort changed beneath my feet, and I felt, by my more easy, sure, and rapid progress, that I had entered on my right path,—the path intended for me.

While I examined, one by one, all the documents in my hands, endeavouring to make myself master of the smallest details, I felt as if aided by some invisible assistance. My comprehension was stronger, my conception clearer and more exact, my understanding quicker. After ten or twelve days of close and assiduous work, I perceived, distantly marked out, the grand lines of this admirable and supernatural

* The Rev. Père Ratisbonne, with whom I afterwards became personally acquainted, remembered this fact, and thought, with me, that there was in this circumstance some interference of Providence.

history. But alas ! how many gaps I also perceived in the succession of events ! With the fragmentary elements which, in these brief reports and minutes of proceedings, I possessed, how was I to connect the scattered details between which the links were wanting ?

I was, nevertheless, determined to have the whole truth, for I should have been ashamed to take up my pen to write a history treating of divine and sacred things with less care than is taken by certain worldly consciences in retracing the story of human events.

Resolved to examine, verify, and elucidate everything for myself, I formed the design of taking journey after journey, for the purpose of interrogating all the persons who had witnessed these wonderful facts, to see with my own eyes, and listen to the words of those who had been miraculously cured, and to make inquiries of their medical men, their families, and their neighbours, respecting these extraordinary occurrences.

I began first of all by Nevers, where Bernadette had entered the Religious life.

Safely guided in my search by a thorough examination of all the documents, whether in print or manuscript, I could, by questioning her anew, clear up whatever appeared to me to be still obscure, and thus succeed in obtaining a clear and exact account of all that related to the apparitions, and of all the facts with which this

privileged child of Mary had had directly to do. Writing down all her words with the minutest accuracy, I afterwards repeated to her myself what she had just before been telling me, in order to be quite certain of having fully understood the truth, not only in its general outline, but also in the individual character and aspect of the slightest isolated detail.*

When she had told me everything, and had in this way given me all that the treasury of her memory possessed, Bernadette promised me another aid,—that of her prayers. I then pursued my way to the south, there to continue my intellectual voyage of discovery.

At the same time I discerned, more and more, the sanctity of the work I was undertaking. In proportion as I fixed my mind on these super-human events, breathed this religious atmosphere, and conversed with the beloved child of Mary, the feeling increased within me of my own unworthiness to treat upon such a subject,

* The Reverend Mother Joséphine Imbert, Superior-General of the Sisters of Nevers, who was present at these conversations, sometimes wondered at such-and-such of my interrogations. "Are you going to relate this?" she would ask, with regard to some apparently useless and superfluous question; "it would have no interest." "I agree with you; but it is necessary that I should know even the secondary details, lost in the twilight, in order to obtain a truer and more vivid realization of the principal facts, and so be able to present them in their actual physiognomy. I wish nothing to escape me. The historian ought not to relate everything, unless he would be wearisome, interminable, and puerile; but he ought to know everything. The smallest incident may throw some additional light into the mind which is seeking to recall the past."

and to write a book like this. I feared to put my hand to it, and felt that I must first prepare myself by recollection and prayer. On quitting Bernadette and Nevers, I retired, therefore, for a fortnight, far from all noise and distraction, to the Chartreux at Vauclair, in Dordagne, and it was not until after this retreat and preparation before God that I resumed my researches in the land of truth.

V.

My first stage, and the first miracle I had to mention, was at Bordeaux,—that of the young Lacassagne. The father of this child, entering into the fullest details, not only respecting the malady of his son, but of the anguish of the family, and the various means by which Providence had led them to have recourse to our Lady of Lourdes, successively presented to my mental and sympathizing vision the most vivid and touching scenes, tearful and poignant, in which the finger of God, at every moment visible, directed all things towards the end. From thence I went to Tartas, to M. Moreau de Sazennay, whose daughter had suddenly been restored to sight; to Nay, where, also suddenly, our Lady of Lourdes had delivered Mme. Rizan from a paralysis of a quarter of a century's duration, and cured the young Busquet of an ulcer, incurable by human means.

Wherever I studied closely any of these exceptional acts of power from on high, I also

remarked, not without being greatly struck by the fact, a wonderful sequence of providential incidents which had preceded and prepared the way for this sovereign act of the grace of God, answering prayer and commanding nature.

In the examination of the miracles, I had only thought of stating, on the one hand, the physical reality of the malady, and on the other the certainty of the cure, incapable of any natural explanation. But I found myself, after this preliminary and indispensable medical examination, insensibly carried beyond the narrow boundary of purely technical inquiries, and faced by another study, far more lofty and extensive, in which, here and there, might be perceived the secret springs of the divine action, the mysterious ways of Providence stirring human souls, bending wills, accommodating circumstances, arranging concurrent events, in an infinitely varied arena, in which the living actors were over-ruled by the good pleasure of His power.

What were the antecedents, the consequences, the reverberations and echoes of this or that miraculous cure? What depths lay underneath the surface of the material fact? What was the previous life of the persons? By what ways were they led to this wondrous end of an incurable ill? What were the various incidents, the distances melting into space, the far-off horizons, and all the harmonies of this mysterious work, wrought by the direct intervention of God?

Vast questions, which of myself it would not

have occurred to me to ask, but of which, at every instant, I heard the answers in the confidences of those who spoke to me, and opened to me their hearts.

The narrations of these great and humble souls who related to me in every detail the most marvellous event in their existence, threw a ray of light, sometimes on one of these points, and sometimes on another. The miracle was found to be the outcome or *dénouement* of a moral and religious drama,—a drama of a thousand episodes, of touching and unexpected changes, in which I could perceive God acting in weight, number, and measure, disposing all things with minute and infinite delicacy, as well as with boundless power. Thus, in the ancient days of the creation, while He laid the foundations of the mountains, and set bounds to the immensity of the unfathomable waters, His creative hand shaped the corolla of the flower, the leaf that trembles on the tree, and the lowly blade of the meadow grass.

Like Christopher Columbus, who, when his voyage had brought him into certain latitudes, perceiving unknown vegetation on the land, and unknown constellations in the heavens, comprehended that he was approaching a new world and countries unexplored, I, too, became aware that my search was leading me within sight of horizons wholly unknown from ordinary points of view, and wholly beyond the range of purely technical examinations, cold commissions of inquiry, or colourless reports, and I tasted the deep joy of an unexpected discovery.

Unexpected it was, indeed ! For, contrary to Columbus, whose genius had divined everything, my puny spirit had foreseen nothing, and I owed it to Providence alone that I was carried by the breath of His grace to these wondrous shores.

I arrived at Lourdes on the 8th of September, 1867, on the Feast of our Lady's Nativity. Her great servant, the Curé Peyramale, gave me hospitality. I was under a holy roof.

I collected fresh testimony. Numerous documents, private correspondences written at the time of the apparitions, personal memoranda of eye-witnesses, were brought to me from all sides.

I had reached the end of my voyage. So far, at least, as my limited vision could perceive, the entire history of these supernatural events presented itself to me in a majestic whole, and also in the exquisite grace and charm of its particular episodes. The grand lines of the divine panorama imposed themselves upon my gaze. Like the navigator with his telescope, I could, with attention and mental analysis, clearly discern the smallest details. The mariner cried "Land ! land !" And I exclaimed, " Providence, and God !" And, unceasingly absorbed in what I was contemplating, I earnestly endeavoured to stamp within me an indelible impression of the marvellous picture I was desirous of showing, through the crystal of a faithful narrative, to the men of my time and to posterity.

VI.

The first historic type I had to study was the innocent Bernadette, who had received the incomparable gift of beholding and conversing with the Blessed Mother of God, and thus of serving for a moment as a connecting link between heaven and earth.

It would be difficult to express to what a degree I felt my soul stirred to its depths, both at Nevers and at Lourdes, every time that God granted me the favour of conversing with this child of predilection, and hearing her speak of the spotless Virgin who had eighteen times appeared to her at the rocks of Massabielle. Nothing can give an idea of her impressive candour, and the pure light of her deep and limpid eyes. There was about her an indescribable something which was superior to earth, not in power, but in an august purity, which seemed to dwell within her. Her look was a reflection of the firmament, and the accent of her words an echo of Paradise.

In seeing her and listening to her, my tears were with difficulty repressed, and I understood in some measure what was felt by the disciples on the way to Emmaus, while to their charmed ears and their burning hearts the Divine Wayfarer was speaking.

Thus was I also in the presence of this radiant innocence, relating to me, unworthy, the apparitions of Mary, and the beauties of the Immaculate Virgin.

And when afterwards, prayerfully pondering these things, I began to write the heavenly history, I had ever before me the memory and image of this virginal soul, fragrant with celestial perfume. Thus, in the course of the narrative, when there was occasion to speak of Bernadette, to sketch her portrait, or repeat her words, my pen expressed itself with a tender respect, my brush sought, of its own accord, the most delicate colours, and with pious affection lingered as it traced the outlines of this angelic face of a child of earth, this ideal reality.

But whilst I was thus freely allowing myself the Christian joy of speaking the whole truth, my conscience was suddenly and overpoweringly troubled by a scruple which chilled my heart and checked my trembling pen. "But," I asked myself, "what am I doing? This portrait of Bernadette which I am delineating with religious respect, the aureole with which I show her brow to be encircled, the pedestal on which I place her image, the royal throne upon which, in the accuracy of history, I seat her,—all this glory with which I am surrounding her, Bernadette, in the depth of her peaceful retreat, will suddenly become aware of when she sees it for herself. And then, may not this book, which I am writing for the edification of all who may read it, become, by a strange subversion of my design, a temptation to vain self-complacency in that blessed soul, and cloud it with some thought of pride; so that, while wishing to do good to all, I incur the frightful danger of beginning in the first place by doing harm to herself?"

I endeavoured to take comfort in the reflection that as she had, when still a child, and in the world, resisted the enthusiasm of the multitudes, she could not henceforth be sensible to human praise, and that, on this particular point at least, she was assuredly confirmed in grace. But here a new stumbling-block presented itself.

"Yes, doubtless," I thought, "she will not even be conscious of a temptation which would, in her place, befall any other daughter of Eve; but precisely *because* of this humble opinion of herself, which nothing can alter, what distressing pain and grief it will be to see herself thus, in the full blaze of publicity, presented to the admiration, affection, and respect of every Christian reader! Can I inflict upon her this cruel pain, and coldly plunge the sharp point of such a dagger as this into the humility of her heart?"

And in my perplexity I knew not what decision to arrive at, in the inevitable dilemma: "This book will cause Bernadette great suffering and confusion, or great harm,—temptation."

This anxiety arrested and paralyzed my mind, which, from its particular temperament, admits of no dependence but upon truth, and except in perfect freedom is incapable of action.

A happy inspiration at last pointed out to me the very simple solution of this difficulty. I addressed myself to the Reverend Mother Joséphine Imbert, Superior-General of the Sisters of Nevers, and told her plainly what had occurred to my mind, as I have here related it. "To save me from this suffering," I said, "give

me an assurance that the humble girl confided to your keeping shall never see the pages in which I speak of her. Then only can I show her as she is, and declare plainly to all how the Blessed Virgin has chosen and loved her."

The Reverend Mother-General made me this promise, at the same time adding that Bernadette always put aside any writings in which she was mentioned, and refused to read or listen to anything which could in any way tend to glorify herself.

This, therefore, is the explanation of the concluding sentence of *Our Lady of Lourdes*, and which, like all the rest, is the literal expression of the truth: "Buried in her cell, or absorbed in the care of the sick, the privileged child of Lourdes has closed her ears to all earthly distractions, turning her thoughts away from them, to meditate in peace and solitude, or to experience the joys of charity. Dead to the vanities of this world, she lives to God in humility..... This book, which we have just written, and which speaks so much of Bernadette, Sister Marie-Bernard will never see."

VII.

From December, 1867, our work began to appear in successive portions in the *Revue du monde Catholique*. "With what impatience," said one of the Sisters of Nevers: "With what impatience we looked forward to these pages, containing the history of the recent apparitions

and miracles of the Queen of Heaven ! As soon as the *Revue* arrived at Saint Gildard, bringing us some new chapters, our Rev. Mother Joséphine Imbert was eager to let it be read in the community-room, but the presence of our dear sister being an obstacle, some little scene like the following took place.

"The reverend mother, the novice-mistress, or one of the assistants, would say to Bernadette : ' You are delicate, my dear sister ; it is well for you now and then to rest a little, and take more nourishing food, so as to be better able to bear fatigue. You will dine to-day and to-morrow at the infirmary.' "

And it was thus, during the temporary absence of the unsuspecting Bernadette, that the good sisters read, in the community-room or the refectory, those pages, the greater part of which were filled with her, and in which, after the most holy Virgin Mary, she was the principal and most exquisite figure.

In a day or two, when this reading was finished, Sister Marie-Bernard, having sufficiently profited by her exceptional diet and repose, was re-admitted to her ordinary life, and returned, unaware of anything, to take her lowly place at the common table.

We had long,—almost from the first,—been informed of this little arrangement, and had, on more than one occasion, smilingly mentioned it. Still, however, a shadow, though of a different nature than before, rested upon our mind. "Was, then, Bernadette," we asked ourselves, "to know absolutely nothing, in any way, of

this account of her own experience, and was she, the witness of the apparitions, to leave the world without having had an opportunity of saying, 'This book is the truth?'"

This question, which seemed to be answered in advance, the future, as will be seen, was to settle in a manner quite otherwise than we had thought.

It is an universal law that nothing that God wills, nothing that He blesses, is accomplished here below without opposition and contradiction,—opposition and contradiction stirred up by the enemy of all good. This sign of heaven's favour was not by any means wanting to our work, and even in quarters where we should least have expected it, the work of truth encountered hindrances and found obstacles to overcome. But what matters it to recal these needless details? Let us only say, that God upheld our courage, affording us, in our weakness, aid in the prayers of Bernadette, and providing us with a guide through all our difficulties, in the lofty wisdom of His servant, the Curé Peyramale.

As soon as our book was finished, we naturally, as becomes a submissive son of the Church, hastened to send the first copy to the common Father of the faithful. Pope Pius IX. read this narrative, and notwithstanding the extreme reserve of the Court of Rome, and the fact that the writer was a layman, his Holiness did not hesitate to address to him, personally, the solemn

Brief which implicitly, and for the first time, acknowledged the truth of the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin at the grotto of Lourdes, and the reality of the miracles.

"Receive our congratulations, very dear son,"—thus wrote to us the head of the Church,—“since, honoured by a singular benefit, you have succeeded in accomplishing your work with the most accurate research and diligence, and have endeavoured so to establish and demonstrate the new apparition of the most clement Mother of God, that from the conflict itself of human malice with the divine mercy, the *luminous evidence of the fact* should be more strongly and clearly apparent.

"From the exposition you have given of every detail, all will be able to see how greatly our holy religion redounds to the true advantage of peoples; how it fills those who have recourse to it, not only with heavenly and spiritual benefits, but with such also as are earthly and temporal; how powerful it is, in the absence of all material force, to maintain order; how it restrains within due bounds the strong emotions of even justly excited multitudes; how zealously the clergy strive for such results as these, and far from encouraging superstition, show themselves to be slower and more severe than all others in passing judgment on facts which appear to be beyond the powers of nature.

"Nor less clearly will it be made evident that in vain does impiety war against religion, and in vain do the wicked strive to frustrate the designs of Divine Providence, who is ever wont

so to make use of their guilty perversity and audacity, as by their means to cause His works to shine forth in greater power and splendour."

And after having thus himself indicated point by point of this history, and plainly shown the general bearing of the events accomplished at Lourdes, the Sovereign Pontiff, awarding it a place even in the economy of the divine plan, concluded his brief by the following prophetic affirmation :

" Most willingly, therefore, we accept your volume entitled *Notre Dame de Lourdes*, having faith that she, who by the wonderful signs of her power and goodness draws to herself multitudes of pilgrims from all parts, wills to make use of what you have written, in order still further to propagate, and win to greater fervour towards herself, the piety and confidence of men, so that all may obtain a share in the fulness of her grace.

" As a pledge of the success which we predict for your work, receive our Apostolic Benediction, which we very affectionately address to you, as a testimony of our gratitude and our paternal regard.

" Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, 4th of September, 1869, in the twenty-fourth year of our pontificate.

" PIUS IX., POPE."*

* The Latin text of this Brief is given in the preface to *Our Lady of Lourdes*. In the appendix to this present book, (in the original,) are also given, after the Papal Brief, the letters of Mgr. Laurence, Bishop of Tarbes, the Abbé Peyramale, Curé of Lourdes, and the Rev. Père Sempé, Superior of the Missionaries ; relative to the former work, with regard to which M. Lasserre received also the approbation of the Cardinals, Archbishops, and

VIII.

In conformity with the prophetic words of the infallible oracle of the Vatican, and with the belief expressed in the eulogistic letters of more than forty bishops, it appeared that Mary had in fact made choice of this feeble instrument to propagate her glory, and give an universal development to her work.

Our Lady of Lourdes having deigned to bless this work from the time of its first appearance, editions of it multiplied at once to an extent and with a rapidity out of all proportion to human successes. Everywhere it spread, among all classes,—rich and poor, faithful and non-Catholics,—penetrating even into the churches, where, in numberless parishes, it was publicly read from the pulpit, in the services of the Month of Mary. It was spontaneously translated into English, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Flemish, Dutch, Breton, Polish, Hungarian, Sclavonic, and several dialects of the East; printed and reprinted at Madrid, Lisbon, Amsterdam, Ghent, Luxembourg, Fribourg in Brisgau, Trent, Modena, Buda-Pesth, Warsaw, New York, Bogota, and Rio Janeiro.

As popular in the New World as in the Old, this book, by God's permission, has found its

Bishops of Bordeaux, Besançon, Rennes, Toulouse, Bourges, Aix, Albi, Nevers, Quimper, Rodez, St. Claude, St. Diè, St. Jean-de-Manrienne, Séz, Tulle, Troyes, Valence, Vannes, Verdun, Versailles, Périgueux, Nancy, Moulins, Montpellier, Mende, Luçon, Limoges, Langres, Grenoble, Gap, Evreux, Châlons, Carcassonne, Beauvais, Autun, Arras, Aire, Amiens, Tarentaise, Puy, Montauban, Soissons, and Le Mans.

way into every country, to fulfil its apostolic office, and repeat, in the name of the Immaculate Mother, the words of her Divine Son our Lord : "Come unto Me all you that are burdened, and I will refresh you."

The populations were moved by this simple narrative of the apparitions and miracles of our Lady of Lourdes; many unbelievers were brought back to the faith; numbers of sick were cured ;* distant pilgrimages hastened from every quarter of the globe, at the voice of Mary ; and the splendid basilica to her who had appeared to Bernadette, was raised with the gold of all nations.

A child finds a seed and drops it in the ground, not knowing what it will become. The blessing of God develops it into a noble tree, whose foliage shelters the birds of the air, and beneath whose shade successive generations come to rest. The child who would lift its smallest branch would find himself powerless beneath its weight. And thus is the omnipotence of God, when it pleases Him to employ as His instrument the puny work of His feeble creature. *Non nobis, Domine, non nobis ; sed Nomini Tuo da gloriam.*

Could glory in this matter be ascribed to any besides God and Mary, this human glory would belong entirely to the humble Bernadette and the humble Curé Peyramale. We were merely the word which spoke, that is to say, the sounding brass and the tinkling cymbal ; they were

* In the appendix are mentioned two of the supernatural cures, in which the book, *Notre Dame de Lourdes*, was the direct instrument in calling those whom Mary wished to heal and convert.

charity, action, and life. What we related, they had done. We were but the historian of the events, they were the heroes.

IX.

It seemed the will of Providence to make manifest, by proofs and counter proofs, what the holy father in his brief had called the *luminous evidence of the fact*. And after, as we have just seen, having called forth the testimony of the authorities of the Church, after having Himself sanctioned this book by making it an instrument of His mercy, it pleased Him also to make use of it to silence and humiliate the enemies of all belief, and, in short, to grant this petition in the Litany of the Saints: *Ut inimicos sanctæ Ecclesiæ humiliare digneris, Te rogamus audi nos.*

The preface of *Our Lady of Lourdes* contained these words: "The truth being once ascertained, I wrote it with as much freedom as if, like the Duc de Saint Simon, I had closed my door and related a history destined only to appear a century hence. I was desirous of telling everything while the witnesses are still alive, and of giving their names and abodes, so that it should be possible to question them, and, with a view to verify my statements, reiterate the inquiries which I myself had made. It was my wish that each reader should be able to examine the assertions for himself, and if I had been sincere, do homage to the truth; if I had lied, put me to confusion and dishonour."

The matter having been thus precisely and clearly stated, no one,—absolutely no one,—from the enemy's camp ventured to engage in a contest against the material accuracy of the facts related. In presence of this history and its diffusion, the freethinking chiefs and critics, such as Schérer, Pouchet, and Guérout,* set themselves loudly to deny the metaphysic possibility of the miraculous, but not one was found rash enough to attack, hand to hand, one single case among these extraordinary occurrences, or call in question the reality of one of these sudden and supernatural cures. All felt that they were proved beyond a doubt, and that, on the ground of historic truth, any caviller would be inevitably worsted.

Much more than this. M. Artus, a man of firm faith and sound reasoning, who was then personally unknown to me, undertook on this subject to drive back the freethinkers to their furthest entrenchments, shut off all way of escape, and change the clandestine retreat of the critics into a general discomfiture of the army. Placing his stake in the hands of a Paris notary, he laid a wager of ten thousand francs *minimum*, (and any more considerable sum at the pleasure of his adversary,) that all the supernatural cures related in this book were true—absolutely and rigorously true,—and defying any person who

* See, among the contemporary journals, *Le Temps*, Aug., 1869, (Article Schérer;) *l'Avenir National*, Aug., 31, (Art. Pouchet;) *l'Opinion Nationale*, Aug., 25, (Art. Guérout,) &c.

did not believe this, to prove their falsity by an inquiry, accepting as judges in the debate such-or-such magistrates of the court, and such-or-such members of the institute, or of the academy of medicine, chosen by lot. On this categoric arraignment, a few freethinkers, tempted at first by the bait of gain, and ignorant of the question, presented themselves. But after reflection, and probably after information obtained by the friends of the sect in the localities where the facts related had taken place, all, *without exception*, ignominiously retreated. The rout was as universal as it was complete.*

Notwithstanding so many expressions of approbation, so many proofs and manifest signs of a blessing from on high upon a book which the grace of God had enabled me to write, must I own that one subject of deep regret still troubled me? Having with such religious care studied every detail, in order to record it with accuracy, it would have been a happiness to me could Bernadette have been made acquainted

* See, on this subject, the very interesting *Histoire du Défilé Public à la Libre Pensée sur les Miracles de Notre Dame de Lourdes*, par E. Artus, Paris, Palmé.

As to such facts as are foreign to the supernatural, and such as relate to the proceedings of the administration, although we have, with an entire independence and an unusual openness, spoken of men and matters, not a protest, not an objection has been made on the part of those whose portrait we deemed it necessary to take, and whose deeds we blamed with the just severity of history. They also knew that our proofs and official documents were irrefutable, and since, to raise discussion on the matter could only end in confusion for themselves, all they could do was to bow in silence. This silence, utter and absolute on their part, is a formal recognition of the correctness of every statement in our narrative which concerns their own share in what took place.

with my account in its final completeness, so as to judge how far it was correct, and nothing short of the considerations I have named would have induced me to deny myself a satisfaction of heart and mind, which, as may easily be understood, would have been to me of such exceeding value.

But never do we give to God without receiving still more from Him in return. While accepting this, to me, cruel sacrifice, the paternal providence of God, as will be seen, was about to find the means of compensating me a hundred-fold, in another and a better form, with this sanction and approbation on the part of Bernadette, of which, out of respect to herself, I had renounced all hope.

I once expressed my regret to the Sisters of Saint Gildard. "And so, Bernadette," I said, with a sigh, "must ever remain in ignorance of all that, in *Our Lady of Lourdes*, I have related of her own history."

"Yes, and no," was the answer. "In accordance with your wishes, she has never had any knowledge or suspicion of the portrait you have drawn of her; but with regard to the details of all the facts which concern herself or the apparitions, there has been no need for her to read your book in order to be thoroughly aware of what you have written about them."

I showed surprise; but the speaker continued: "From the time the book first appeared,—(is it not now ten or twelve years ago?)—it has naturally happened that almost all our sisters, sometimes one, sometimes another, in the inti-

macy of conversation, have many and many a time questioned Sister Marie-Bernard on every single episode of her life at Lourdes, and the particulars she has given have invariably been found to correspond exactly with your account.

"Often, too, a counter-test has been applied, by repeating to her, word for word, as nearly as memory permitted, one or another passage from *Notre Dame de Lourdes*. It was said to her: 'This is what is related; did it happen so?' 'Yes, exactly,' she would answer. And thus, in the cordial freedom and intimacy of a family of religious, the frequent questioning of Bernadette has corroborated and confirmed the perfect accuracy of your work."

"And in this minute questioning, point after point; in this microscopic examination, has no error been discovered?"

"One only, and it is this. In relating the sixth apparition, that of the 25th of February, you say that the Blessed Virgin called the child by her name, '*Bernadette—ma fille.*' This is a little mistake. On this point you either misunderstood our dear sister, or there was some confusion in your notes. But this detail is of such very slight importance, and touches so little the primary subjects and the *ensemble* of the book, that we did not tell you of it until now. She also sometimes thought that the apparition in Easter week, generally spoken of as on the morrow of the festival, but of which she could not indicate the day, did not take place either on a Monday or a Friday. She made, however, no positive affirmation with

regard to this, and referred to what she had declared to the commission of inquiry, and also to the pamphlet of the Abbé Fourcade.

"'I was then,' she said, 'a little girl without any instruction, not knowing how to read or write, ignorant of my catechism, and having no notion of the date by the calendar. I did not usually even pay any attention to what day of the week it was; *I thought only of the apparition.*'"

And so, in this long history, so crowded with incidents, among so many facts related, words reported, dialogues repeated, and scenes described, this is the only shadow of a mistake which has ever been perceived by Bernadette!

The only one. "Let them read what is written," she often said of those who, as exceptions, were allowed to see and question her. "I told everything to the commission of inquiry, to M. l'Abbé Fourcade, author of the pamphlet of the *Evêché*, and to M. Henri Lasserre."

Great was my joy on hearing these words, and I returned thanks to our Lady of Lourdes, who has been pleased that her dear child should not depart from this world without having thus attested the truth of the history and the veracity of the historian.

And this was how, after many years, I was rewarded for my sacrifice. The sanction which, on account of a scruple lest I should endanger the humility of Bernadette, I had not chosen to solicit, came to me of itself, without this humility having been in any way either tempted or troubled. In thus allowing her words to be trea-

sured up by her companions in the house of God, and entrusting to their fidelity the deposit of this testimony, Providence, who bestowed the final proof upon me with so much strength, ordered all with sweetness in regard to Bernadette.

And since we are now speaking of the invariable witness, spontaneously and lovingly borne by Sister Marie-Bernard to the truth, we will also mention her invincible horror of any imaginary invention which could in any way whatever affect the perfect veracity of the history.

More than ten years ago we had occasion to communicate to her numerous portions of a legendary account of the apparitions, and of her own life,—a story invented by some foolish persons, without the aid of a single official document, without a single paper from the Evêché of Tarbes, (we have these papers still in our possession,) and without Bernadette herself even having been questioned.

Sister Marie-Bernard at once protested with the liveliest energy against all the errors in this account, confuting them by her own exact statements, her distinct recollections of what really took place, and her emphatic denial of all these imaginary occurrences. She gave us,—and we still have it among our papers,—the original copy of this protest, signed by herself in presence of her superiors, and witnessed by her bishop.

And now that we have made known to our readers all that, directly or indirectly, relates to the public life of Bernadette, let us ask the Religious of Saint Gildard what was Sister Marie-Bernard in her hidden life.

SISTER MARIE-BERNARD.

BOOK III.

THE HIDDEN LIFE AND DEATH.

I.

The precise moment when Bernadette received a vocation to the Religious Life is known to none; she may not even have known it herself. It is, however, certain that she received it at an early date, and that the whole of her remaining life proved that it was from on high.

At Lourdes, and even on the way to the grotto, while the multitudes pressed around her steps, she already longed to spend her days in silence, work, nursing the sick, in prayer and meditation within the sheltering walls of a solitary convent.

This was her dream, but she dared not allow herself to hope that it would ever be realized.

Having witnessed, during all the years of her youth, the activity and virtues of the Sisters of Nevers, she felt unworthy to seek a place in their ranks. The thought of ever becoming one

of them seemed too proud an ambition for one like herself, and her vocation, however real and strong, was powerfully combated by her humility.

"What," she asked herself, "should I be good for?" And, too conscious of her nothingness to know what to answer, she one day confided her trouble to a venerable personage who had authority to advise her.

"How should I dare to ask the dear sisters to receive me, and charge themselves with one who would be only a useless burden?"

"It is true, my child, that you are not fit for much," was the answer; "but, however, I saw you just now paring potatoes. You could, at any rate, be employed in the kitchen to peel vegetables; and besides, it will be an act of charity on the part of the dear sisters to receive you."

"And of very great charity," exclaimed the humble maiden who had had the glory of conversing face to face with the most holy Mother of God, and whose name had gone forth into every continent.

Often did her prayers knock at the gate of heaven, seeking a counsel or command from her whose glorious countenance she was no more to contemplate here below, but who, from the heights of the invisible, watched over her dear daughter, and spoke to her heart by secret inspirations. The light she implored was doubtless given, for, about the middle of 1865, she asked the good Sisters of Nevers, to whom she

was indebted for her education, to crown their kindness by receiving her as a postulant.

The Reverend Mother Roques, who was then superior, welcomed her with open arms, rejoicing to number Bernadette among her daughters.

She remained another year at the hospice at Lourdes, assiduously helping the sisters in tending the sick, and teaching the little children.

Then, the time being come for her departure to the mother-house, in order to enter the noviciate, she went into the town, to embrace for the last time her relations, friends, and the young companions of her childhood, bidding farewell to those she loved, until they should meet again in paradise. To each she gave a little religious picture, on which she had written, "Pray for Bernadette."

And one day, very early in the morning, she repaired to the grotto, and with tears streaming down her cheeks, prayed before the sacred spot where the Blessed Virgin had appeared to her.

For this was her final adien to the scene of so many miracles, the holy grotto to which she had been chosen to show the whole world the way, and from which she was now voluntarily exiling herself for the remainder of her mortal life.

With what invocations this, her greatest sacrifice was accompanied, is unknown except to God, His blessed Mother, and the holy Angels.

Immediately afterwards she quitted Lourdes, and was on her way to Nevers.

II.

Such was the close of her public career, and the departure for her hidden life.

And thus it was that in 1869 we wrote the following words in the concluding pages of *Notre Dame de Lourdes*:

“Bernadette is no longer at Lourdes.....It has been seen how repeatedly and persistently she rejected the gifts enthusiastically pressed upon her, and refused to open to the worldly fortune which knocked at the door of her indigent home. She aspired to other riches.

“‘A day will come,’ the incredulous had at first predicted, ‘when all the world will find out how she will be rewarded.’

“Bernadette has indeed chosen her recompence, and taken possession of her treasure. She has become a sister of charity, vowed to the care of the poor and sick, collected together by public charity in the hospitals.

“Having contemplated the resplendent face of the thrice holy Mother of God, what could she do but become the loving servant of those of whom the Divine Son of that holy Mother said: ‘What you have done to the least of these My brethren, you have done it unto Me.’

“It is among the religious of charity and Christian instruction, well known by the name of *Sisters of Nevers*, that the favoured maiden has taken the veil. An order, loving and beloved, active as Martha, pious as Mary, and

befitting Bernadette, as the nest befits the bird, or the busy hive the bee.

"Each religious family has its own distinctive type. That of the Sisters of Nevers is the same as that of Bernadette,—one of deep peace and serenity, permanent youthfulness of spirit, and innocent attraction. They bear the cross of poverty and suffering, obedience and toil; but for them, as it was for St. Bernard, its weight is lightened by love. Whatever be the yoke, it is easy; whatever the burden, it is light. Contemplating, amid the contradictions of life, the happiness of heaven, of which they already enjoy a foretaste, they have the peaceful aspect of daughters of the Most High, and on their gentle, kind, and cordial countenances, rests the impress of the peace of God.

"Into this calm shelter our Blessed Lady has led her favoured child, until she calls her into paradise; and Bernadette is now Sister Marie-Bernard.

"We saw her not long ago in her religious habit, at the mother-house of this Congregation, the Convent of St. Gildard. Although she is now twenty-five years of age, her face retains the character and grace of early youth. There is about her a fragrance of peaceful innocence, an indescribable charm that belongs not to this earth. Beyond this there is nothing extraordinary to distinguish her, nothing to lead one to suppose that she had received so great a mission from on high. The mighty movement that has been made around her has not touched the bloom of her simplicity; the concourse and en-

thusiasm of multitudes have had no more power to disturb her soul than a stream of water, by flowing over it for an hour or a century, would have power to tarnish a diamond.

"God visits her no longer by radiant apparitions, but by the sacred test of sufferings, frequent and severe, which she endures with a patient sweetness, and almost with joy. Several times when she has been apparently at the point of death, she has said, with a smile: 'I shall not die yet.'"

III.

Bernadette entered the Convent of Saint Gildard, July 8th, 1866. The 16th, the Feast of Mount Carmel, she kept, in her heart, the eighth anniversary of the last apparition of our Lady of Lourdes; and on the 29th of the same month, received the holy habit which was to be hers until death.

Not changing her baptismal name, Marie-Bernard Soubirous became Sister Marie-Bernard.

She was an admirable religious from the first, having a most true and thorough vocation. This was indeed to be expected in one who had had as her mistress of novices our Blessed Lady herself.

Are we to say, then, that nothing of human frailty still remained in this child of earth, so exquisite by nature, and so elevated and sanctified by grace? Was there in her no weakness? No occasional impatience under contradiction,

when she believed truth and justice to be attacked ? Did her lively spirit, her upright and straightforward nature, never, under the force of a sudden impression, impel her to utter words somewhat harsh in their frankness, or whose sincerity was not free from irritation ?

Were we to pretend that this was the case, and that she had attained perfection, Bernadette, in the abode of glory which she has doubtless entered, would strongly disapprove of any such statement, and were she to express her feeling, she would silence us by saying : "It was by no means thus."

Being still in the battle-field through which, for six thousand years, the soldiers of the Church militant have been passing, still in the arena of struggle and merit, Bernadette could not be exempt from the general conditions or the original infirmity of our race. The greatest heroes may be wounded, and this valiant soul was therefore not invulnerable. But it may be that a paternal providence leniently regarded these momentary surprises, as it were, and imperfections of the soul, since each became to Bernadette an occasion of rising to higher virtue, of abasing herself to a deeper humility, and renewing with greater energy her efforts to attain complete sanctity.

Thus the mother awaits, with open arms, the infant who, hurrying to her with feeble steps, falls on the sandy path or the meadow grass. He cries and struggles, or with a vigorous effort rises and begins again, with fresh ardour, to hasten whither he would be.

"Come," says the mother, "it is by little falls like these that infants learn to walk."

But the little creature who runs and falls does not possess this philosophy. To him every accident is a catastrophe, and he weeps at what makes his mother smile.

And thus to Bernadette her smallest imperfections appeared serious sins, for which, after so many good resolutions, she reproached herself bitterly.

Alas! in different degrees this is the history of all who strive, as far as in them lies, and with the grace of God, to attain to Christian perfection. There is no one who does not sometimes fall, whether by suddenly stumbling at an unforeseen obstacle, or simply from fatigue, weakness, and want of courage. With different persons these falls are more or less rare, and more or less serious. One Man only never fell,—He who is Holiness itself; one saint alone had no atom of dust upon the spotless robe of her purity,—the Immaculate Virgin, Queen of Angels and the elect. Sanctity in this world is not absolute perfection, but an energetic and persevering tendency towards this perfection, a determined warfare, which has already secured the best positions, but whose advantages, although the commencement of victory, are still here and there lessened by the resistance of the enemy.

"What is it to conquer?" a great captain was once asked.

"To advance is to conquer."

But the battle is made up of hundreds of isolated combats, and in the advancing army it happens that, either in the wings or centre, a company may give way. Each defeat in detail, although slightly weakening it, does not hinder the general victory. The army advances, and the flag, riddled with balls, is planted successively on bastion after bastion of the enemy. Such is the battle of the saints. Their partial defeats amaze the minds of those whose illusion is, that virtue is all of one piece, and the saint an angel.

Thus the saint may have defects,—a particular leaning towards one or another kind of imperfection: but what makes his greatness and his glory is this, that unlike the cowardly and tepid, he refuses to live in peace with this weakness; but, on the contrary, he mourns over it, wrestles with it, and fights against it perseveringly. While most men accommodate themselves to the habitual indulgence of their ruling inclinations,—anger, ill-temper, touchiness, or special antipathies,—the true Christian and the saint never consent to this voluntary bondage, but instead of contentedly accepting the domination of the enemy, they resist and renounce it. When they fall, they rise quickly, ashamed, repentant, and eager to repair at once the pain they may have caused, or the scandal they may have given.

Uniting in his heart the love of God and of his neighbour, and yet in his frailty capable of sinning, the saint is, before all else, a man of perpetual good-will.

IV.

These thoughts are not a digression, but belong in a two-fold manner to our subject, since they explain on the one hand the small imperfections which might still remain in our sister, and for which she reproached herself with inflexible severity; and on the other they are the utterance of a deeply implanted feeling often expressed by Bernadette herself, with a good sense as sound as it was delicate.

Bernadette had a great fondness for reading, a taste in which her state of health allowed her frequent leisure to indulge. The subject of her book sometimes gave rise, on her part, to reflections like the following:

"I do not like those lives of saints in which they are represented as wholly perfect, and simply faultless, without a single weakness, inequality, or shadow. They are so celestial as to be almost discouraging to us, who are so far from such a state. If they had reached it, we should at least be shown all the successive stages of the path they followed before arriving at it. I wish that, as well as their pure excellence, we were allowed to see the defects which they had not as yet entirely mastered, the struggles they had to maintain, the falls which humbled them, and from which they had to recover.....for, after all, things must have happened thus. Their saintliness could not always go on so smoothly, and, as it were, on wheels.

They certainly had their nature, their share of the consequences of original sin, their own disposition, just as I, who have so bad a one.

"The contemplation of their complete and total triumph teaches me nothing; it is by seeing how they struggled that I should learn to strive. They should be shown to have been like *us*, that we may learn to become like *them*."

It is worthy of remark in one who, like Bernadette, had been favoured with apparitions, that in reading the Lives of the Saints, she took no particular pleasure or interest in extasies, visions, or extraordinary details of any kind, but above all sought for what every one may imitate, the *practice* of a perfect Christian, the application of Catholic teaching, and the counsels of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The holy Scriptures possessed a deep and unfailing attraction for Bernadette, who preferred them to the most eloquent sermons or commentaries ever preached or written. She was sometimes found with the Gospels in her hand, weeping over the sufferings of our Redeemer. "The Passion touches me more," she would say, "when I read it than when I hear it preached."

Bernadette's companions were, from the first, struck by her graceful and cordial kindness, her child-like gaiety, her intelligence, and the original turn of her mind. She gave her whole attention to whatever she was about, and did it thoroughly, playing more heartily than any

other at recreation, always assiduous and attentive during the hours of work, and absorbed and devout in all her religious duties, at church, meditation, and prayer. Independent, perhaps, by nature, but dependent by choice, she had the greatest love for her conventional rule.....A willing prisoner in the sacred enclosure of the religious life, she was joyful in the holy freedom of the children of God.

V.

A group of sisters sitting in the shade of a tree on the terrace of Saint Gildard, were one day conversing on the importance of implicit obedience to rule. "In the middle of a letter," said one, "the Benedictine leaves off, without stopping to dot an i, the moment she hears the bell calling her away."

"There is nothing difficult in that," remarked the little Sister Marie-Bernard, who was a model of exact observance.

"The most beautiful example," said another, "was given by St. Teresa. It is related that, being in her cell, the Infant Jesus appeared to her. She took Him in her arms, and was enjoying the happiness of talking with Him, when the bell of the monastery rang, summoning the nuns to the chapter-room or chapel, I forget which. Without a moment's hesitation St. Teresa set down the Infant Jesus, and repaired to the rest of the community. On her return she found Him still there, but with the form and

stature of a youth, as when, with His Blessed Mother and St. Joseph, He worked at Nazareth. ‘ My daughter,’ He said, ‘ because of your act of obedience to rule, I have grown as much in your soul as I have grown in your sight since you went away.’ ”

Bernadette listened attentively to the pious legend. When the rest had all expressed their admiration, one of them remarked: “ But Sister Marie-Bernard, you say nothing.”

“ I !” she answered, with vivacity, “ I am sure I should not have done the same as St. Teresa.”

“ And what would you have done ?” asked one, amid the general amazement.

“ Instead of setting down the Infant Jesus when I heard the bell, I would have kept Him in my arms, and carried Him with me. He would not have left me, I am sure !”

VI.

Besides the deep and inward attraction which had drawn Bernadette to the religious life, she also felt the need of a safe refuge from the invasions of the multitude, and the encroachments even of the pious curiosity of which she was the object.

Upon her first entrance into the mother-house, she entreated the Superior-General to grant her, if possible, the favour of never being summoned to the parlour; submitting, however, in this, as

in all else, to the rule of obedience, but plainly expressing the wish of her heart.

Strangers were, nevertheless, constantly arriving at St. Gildard, asking to be received by Sister Marie-Bernard, and having to resign themselves as best they could to the impossibility of even looking upon her features. "At least show us which is her room," they would ask; and then look wistfully at the windows of her cell. Others would kneel in the place she was accustomed to occupy in church, and respectfully kiss the wood where her hands rested, and on which she bowed her head at the Elevation. Many would try for a chance of seeing her, by begging one of her companions to point her out if she passed.

A lady rang at the convent one rainy day, between twelve and one o'clock, when nearly all the community were passing to and fro in the cloisters. The door being opened, the lady cautiously accosted the first sister she met, asking, with a mysterious air: "Could you not show me which is Sister Marie-Bernard?"

"Sister Marie-Bernard? Ah! very well, very well!" And the sister no less cautiously threaded her way through the throng of her companions into the interior of the house.

A long time passed, and, as she did not return, the lady spoke to another.

"Sister Marie-Bernard?" said the religious. "But I saw you speaking to her; it was she who went away. You must not expect to see her back again!"

The same thing happened several times. She

was one morning arranging the flowers, &c., on the altar of the Blessed Virgin, when some strangers came up. "My good sister," said one of them, "tell us which is Bernadette's place. There is a Profession to-day, and we are assured that she will be at the ceremony. Could we see her?"

"No, Oh no, it is impossible; she will not be in her usual place to-day."

And so saying, she disappeared.

But it sometimes happened that her incognito was betrayed. A priest one day entering the church of Saint Gildard, in company with a very stout, good-natured, and exuberant lady, saw a sister kneeling, as she made the Way of the Cross. He recognized her, and whispered to his companion: "That is Sister Marie-Bernard."

Scarcely had he pronounced the imprudent words, before the enthusiastic person rushed away to throw herself down at the feet of the young novice, kissing her dress with effusion, and ending by holding out her arms to embrace her.

Bernadette, thinking the woman mad, uttered a cry of terror; but soon perceiving the reason of these demonstrations, she only fled the faster.

"Oh, Reverend Mother," she exclaimed, as she took refuge with the superior, "for pity's sake, if I am to suffer such things, let me never go down into the church!"

And, in fact, very often, on great festivals and profession days, when she knew that strangers would be present, she was allowed to take her place long beforehand, in a dark corner

of the tribune, from whence she could be present at the offices without being seen.

It was painful to her to be summoned to the parlour, although the superior interfered as little as possible with her desire to remain in privacy ; it was painful to her when she knew that some stranger was trying to obtain a glimpse of her through the half-opened door. "Why," she would sorrowfully ask, "should people try to see me more than any one else ? What is there about me, more than about others ? God made use of me, just as He made use of the oxen of Betharram, when they stood still, and struck again and again with their hoofs over the place where the miraculous statue was buried : that is all ; nothing more."

When, as sometimes happened, persons permitted themselves to express a sentiment of veneration for her, or speak of the crown assuredly destined for her in paradise, she would instantly laugh at the idea, and turn any such speeches into ridicule. She regarded as her enemies those who offered her any kind of adulation. "Yes, indeed ! it is easy enough to canonize people !" she would say ; "and then, when they are dead, no one takes the trouble to pray for them, but they are left to suffer in purgatory, without any one thinking of helping them out !"

Her repugnance to see visitors did not at all diminish as time went on, and sometimes gave occasion to an extraordinary amount of seeking.

She one day caught sight of the Bishop of Nevers on his way to the convent, accompanied by an ecclesiastic whom she did not know. They

were coming towards the infirmary. Sister Marie-Bernard therefore quietly quitted it, and going to the room where the linen was kept, busied herself with some mending she found there. Meanwhile she was sought for in the garden, the kitchen, the sacristy, the chapel,—everywhere,—until at last her place of refuge was discovered.

"Quick! quick!" said the breathless pur-sivant, "you are wanted: Monseigneur is come to see you."

"No, no," said Bernadette, smiling sadly, "Monseigneur is not come to *see* me, he is come to *show* me." And she rose and went down with a somewhat heavy heart.

"A relation of mine," said one of the sisters, "was extremely desirous of seeing Bernadette, all the more so, perhaps, because it was known to be so difficult to obtain a chance. Piety may have had something to do with this strong desire, but curiosity doubtless had much more. He solicited me so eagerly, that I did the same on his behalf to the Reverend Mother, who did not, however, consider it a case for ordering our sister to appear. 'All that I can do,' she said, 'is to permit her to see him. Tell her that I authorize her to come, but at the same time I leave her free.'

"I ran to find Bernadette. 'Dear sister, there is some one in the parlour, and the mother authorizes you to come down.' 'Well, what else?' she asked, looking at me, not without a

mischievous expression. ‘But, you see, she authorizes you to come.’ ‘But did she add nothing more?’ ‘Yes,’ I answered, timidly, ‘she authorizes you, but at the same time she leaves you free.’

“‘She leaves me free!’ exclaimed Bernadette, joyfully. ‘Well, then, I will not, I will not, I will not!’ And she ran away like a child, and disappeared at the other end of the garden. And so the wish of my poor cousin was never gratified.”

Under certain circumstances, however, she would yield to the pious curiosity of which she was the object. One Sunday, when the sisters were coming out of the refectory, some visitors were in ambush near the entrance, to see her as she passed by.

She saw them from some way off, and, with a little gesture of annoyance, was going in another direction, exclaiming: “They come to look at me just as they would go to look at the fat ox, or the wonderful beast, or any outlandish creature!”

But all at once she changed her mind.

“Well, be it so! Why should not I let myself be shown as an outlandish creature, provided that I am the creature of the good God?”*

And mastering her repugnance, she returned to her place in the ranks of the community.

* “Que je me montre en spectacle comme la bête, pourvu que je sois la bête du Bon Dieu.” “La bête du Bon Dieu” being the name of the lady-cow, or lady-bird. (*Our Lady's bird.*)
Translator.

And thus, sometimes from maidenly modesty, shrinking from the gaze of the inquisitive, sometimes from a spirit of innocent mischief, she turned away her head so as to hide her features, when she perceived, in the courts or cloisters, strangers, who purposely appeared to be there by accident, but whose motive she divined. Sometimes, on the contrary, making a strong effort over herself, she passed them simply, nobly, religiously, without timidity and without assurance. Did she in this follow the impulse of the moment, or the movement of the Spirit who breathes where He will? We know not. Almost always it required an express command from her superior to induce her to appear,—a command which was seldom given.

Some few, nevertheless, obtained access to her, being of the number of those who cannot be denied.

One evening, (it was, we believe, in 1872,) a priest, of lofty stature, and austere and distinguished appearance, presented himself at the Convent of St. Gildard. The superior-general being ill, he was received by one of the assistants.

"I am come from a considerable distance," he said, "having taken this journey expressly to see Sister Marie-Bernard, whose acquaintance I am anxious to make."

"Alas, Monsieur le Curé, I am unable, under present circumstances, to break the enclosure, unless by the formal authorization of the Bishop of Nevers, and I must not conceal from you that this authorization is very difficult to obtain. If it were not for this regulation, our dear sister,

who in coming here sought for solitude, would be always in the parlour."

The priest looked disappointed.

"Monseigneur is not now at Nevers," continued the Assistant; "but still, I would be satisfied with the authorization of the vicar-general."

"I particularly wished to see her without making myself known," said the stranger, "but since it must be so, I give my name."

He opened his black mantle, and the sister perceived the episcopal cross. "I am the Bishop of Orleans."

The sister knelt to receive the illustrious prelate's benediction, and went for Bernadette.

In spite of the superabundant proofs which have confirmed the faith of Christendom in the apparitions of our Lady of Lourdes, Mgr. Dupanloup still felt, it appears, at times, some doubt about them; and it was for this reason that he set out for Nevers, in order himself to become acquainted with this Bernadette, whose testimony respecting them had spread so widely throughout the world.

The bishop remained a long time conversing with Sister Marie-Bernard. When he rose to leave, his eyes were full of tears, and every shadow of doubt had disappeared from his mind. "I have just seen the innocence of a soul," he said, "and the irresistible power of truth."

A few months later saw him also a pilgrim at Lourdes, kneeling before the holy grotto.

VIII.

After her entrance at Saint Gildard, as well as before, the very aspect and speech of Bernadette carried conviction with them, and the impression she produced upon Mgr. Dupanloup is not surprising.

This calm radiance, if we may so call it, whose influence was felt by the Bishop of Orleans, and which, as one of the mothers of the community said, "drew us all to her," had a particular attraction for the young. "Children," said the mother, "run to Bernadette, and Bernadette runs to children. One might say that they were twin souls, to whom a glance sufficed for the mutual recognition of their kindred innocence."

We were told, with regard to a child, the following little anecdote, which we have never forgotten :

"The sister of one of our community arrived one day, accompanied by her little girl of six or seven years old, (it was in the time of our Rev. Mother Joséphine Imbert.) This lady, whose name was Mme. Darfeuille, had the strongest desire to see Bernadette, who was then ill, and confined to her bed,—a desire which the mother-general, who had so solicitous a regard for our beloved sister's deep love of retirement, did not feel that she should be justified in gratifying. Great was the chagrin of Mme. Darfeuille, and our good superior, sincerely pitying her, said : 'Well, to console you a little, I will allow your dear little girl to visit her for a few moments.'

"In another minute the little Madeleine was mounting with me to the infirmary.

"Perceiving Bernadette in bed, the child stopped in the doorway with a charmed expression, and joining her little hands, as if before the altar, or the image of the saints, she stood motionless and recollected, her eyes bright with joy.

"Sister Marie-Bernard, calling her directly to her side, laid her hand on her head, and caressed her affectionately.

"After kissing Bernadette, the child again clasped her hands in the attitude of prayer, and summoned courage to speak to her.

"*Ma sœur*, you have seen the Blessed Virgin?"

"Yes."

"And was she very beautiful?"

"The face of our sister lighted up as the memory of that brightness flashed back upon her soul.

"So beautiful," she answered, in a low voice, of such deep and indescribable feeling, that even now I never recal it without emotion; "So beautiful, that when you have seen her once, you long to die, that you may see her again!"

"After a moment's silence, the child, still clasping her hands with fervour, said: "Sister, I wish very much that you would pray to her for me."

"Very willingly, darling; but you, in return, will pray to her for me."

"But the little creature was not going yet.

"Sister, mamma, too, would very much like you to pray for her."

"Well, then, I will pray also for your mamma," answered Bernadette, touched at the child's request.

"And then the little Madeleine went out of the room, but still with joined hands, and walking backwards, so as to see our sister as long as she could."

The same thing occurred in a thousand different ways, we were told by another sister. "More than once," she said, "I went with Sister Marie-Bernard to our infant school, where the children were wholly unconscious that this was the Bernadette of Lourdes. What followed on her appearing there can only be compared to a quantity of needles when a magnet is moved amongst them. Stirred and uplifted by the mysterious current, they strive, as it were, which shall first reach the irresistible load-stone, and end by clinging in a cluster round it. Such was the effect of Sister Marie-Bernard's entrance into the infant school. No sooner did she appear than there was an extraordinary agitation in the little crowd. One after another the children left their games to hurry to her, holding her dress, and swarming round her."

She herself was, in some respects, always a child, loving to play and run, and ready with any merry and innocent jest. By a singular chance she was the smallest sister in the community, (the "smallest lamb of the flock,") and also the most alert and lively.

One day, the tallest of her companions hap-

pening to be next her at recreation, they agreed to run a race, and started down the long walk leading to the fountain of our Lady of the Waters ; the one making alarming efforts, while the swift-footed Bernadette reached the fountain before her concurrent had accomplished half the distance. But alas ! at the same time her heart beat violently, and she began to spit blood.

IX.

Her health was extremely delicate; the asthma had increased, and with it her cough. Being also very slight and fragile, she was unequal to any laborious occupation.

The functions of infirmarian and sacristan were successively confided to her. She was Mary and Martha at the same time. In the sacristy she taught the children of the choir, had charge of the altar linen and flowers ; in the infirmary she excelled in the care of her sick companions, and while watchfully attending to their physical requirements, so cheered and comforted them by her brightness and sympathy, that she seemed a perpetual sunbeam in their abode of weariness and pain.

Having acquired a considerable knowledge of medicine, as well as great skill in the application of remedies, the medical attendant regarded her as one of his most intelligent and valuable auxiliaries.

During this time, the freethinkers, stupefied and exasperated at the immense movement which had arisen with regard to our Lady of Lourdes, busied themselves in fabricating calumnies against the humble Sister Marie-Bernard, and amongst others, publishing the audacious assertion that she was insane and in confinement. Doctor Damoiseau, a man of science, and President of the Medical Association of the department of the Orne, wishing to ascertain the facts of the case, wrote to his eminent colleague, Dr. Robert Saint-Cyr, President of the Medical Association of la Nièvre, begging that he would inquire into the matter, and furnish him with accurate information respecting it. He received the following reply:

"Nevers, Sept. 3rd, 1872.

"My dear *Confrère*,

"You could not have applied to one better able than myself to give the information you desire, with regard to the young girl of Lourdes, now Sister Marie-Bernard.

"In my capacity as doctor of the community I have for a long time attended this young sister, whose delicate health has given us serious cause for anxiety. This being improved, she is now, from being one of my patients, become my infirmarian, fulfilling the duties of her post to perfection.

"She is twenty-eight years old; small, and of fragile appearance. Calm and gentle by nature, she nurses her sick with much intelli-

gence, and without omitting any detail of the prescriptions ; she consequently possesses great authority over them, and I also, for my part, can rely upon her with great confidence.

"As you will perceive, my dear *confrère*, this young sister is very far from anything approaching to insanity. I will further add, that her peaceful, simple, tranquil disposition, does not in the least degree presuppose any tendency in that direction.

(Signed) "ROBERT SAINT-CYR,

"*Président de la Société des Médecins de la Nièvre.*"

At one time in the infirmary, nursing the sick; at another in the chapel, occupied in Divine worship; Bernadette fulfilled by turns the two great commandments of the law : "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength; and thy neighbour as thyself."

Close to the sacristy is a small parterre, in which grow the flowers intended for the altars, and which Bernadette took delight in tending.

She might at times be seen returning from the fountain, like Rachel or Rebecca, with a vessel of fresh water, which she sprinkled on the dry earth and thirsty flowers, a rural and symbolic occupation, in which Sister Marie-Bernard was, in reality, a striking image of herself.

For what in fact had her life been hitherto ? Now at St. Gildard, in the shadow of the cloister,

she drew daily, from the divine source of the tabernacle, abundant graces, to shed them around her amongst her sick, and in all the precincts of the enclosed garden.

And formerly, at the rocks of Massabielle, and in the light of the outer world, had she not also drawn from the same treasury, and shed upon afflicted souls, as well as upon our arid plains, streams of refreshment, consolation, and peace?

Every day, without exception, unless hindered by illness, Bernadette said the Stations of the Cross in the chapel, and often remained a long time kneeling before the altar of our Blessed Lady,—an altar which she took a special pleasure in adorning with flowers, and arranging with filial solicitude.

She prayed,—for herself? Yes, doubtless, and with trembling, for she felt herself, more than any one, in need of divine assistance and pardon, and her guileless heart had the humility of that of the publican; but she also prayed fervently and incessantly for all who are, alas! out of the way of life.

Since she had received from Mary Immaculate the command to "*pray for sinners*," she had not ceased to apply for their conversion all her supplications to God, and whatever merit He might give her grace to obtain by her works and sufferings; her great and constant anxiety being for the conversion of souls.

"Assuredly," she said, "I pray for the souls in purgatory, but they are sure of their happiness, and with them the possession of God is only a question of time, whilst sinners,—those

who are in a state of mortal sin, are absolutely on the brink of the abyss, and may perish for ever,—it is they who are in peril, and in need of aid, especially in the hour of their agony, when, for them, all is on the point of becoming irrevocable.”

When the veil which hides from us the world unseen shall be removed, annihilated by the light of the day of judgment, how many of those to whom shall be given a place on the right hand, after having been for a long time worthy only of a place on the left, may find that they owe their salvation to the mysterious effect of prayers, sent up from the secrecy of her cell, by a humble religious, whom they never knew! What gratitude will then arise in their hearts for this infinite benefit!.....And in that moment, we hope and believe, Bernadette will shine with a new splendour.

Sister Marie-Bernard was frequently obliged to keep her bed; but although her sufferings often amounted to torture, her patience was angelic. It seemed as if suffering were the culminating point of her vocation, so many opportunities did it give her of unfolding the spiritual treasures which filled her soul. “No one,” said one of her companions, “could suffer more, or suffer better. Bernadette in suffering was the queen in her kingdom.”

Physical pain did not paralyse her natural activity. In bed, or in her easy chair, she was

always working and praying, and shedding around her the sweet brightness of her innocent gaiety.

She was wonderfully skilful with her fingers. Altar cloths and albs, exquisitely embroidered, and the carpet of the sanctuary, are shown at Saint Gildard's as her handiwork. One of the albs, of marvellous beauty, was worn for the first time by Mgr. de Ladoue on his consecration, at Lourdes, as Bishop of Nevers.

She took pleasure also in making and ornamenting sacred emblems in different materials, such as scapulars, or representations of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, or in decorating Easter eggs, which she did with much taste and delicacy, marking with a sharp point sacred symbols upon them with a firm and sure hand. We possess one of these specimens of her graceful manipulation. It is a brown egg, on which she has engraved, on one side, the tiara with the attributes of the Sovereign Pontiff, over which hovers the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, and on the other side a chalice beneath the Sacred Heart, besides other emblems.

During her long nights of sleeplessness she was in the habit of reciting the rosary.

"The earth is round," she said, "and when it is night here it is day in other countries; consequently at every hour the Holy Sacrifice is being offered somewhere, in some place which certainly exists, although it is unknown to us. And I am present in thought at this Mass which

is being said very far away in a church unknown to me. By the light of the night-lamp I see the engravings pasted on the opposite wall, which represent the successive ceremonies of the Mass, and in this way I can follow the Holy Sacrifice even with my eyes. Only," she one day added, with the gaiety which never left her, "there is that tiresome little acolyte who never stirs, and never rings his bell. He makes me impatient. At times I should like to shake him."

If her resignation under suffering might be compared to that of Job, she was far from accrediting herself with this virtue, but, on the contrary, frequently accused herself of not knowing how to bear pain well, appearing annoyed and ashamed when any one admired her patience.

"Sister Marie-Bernard, how submissive you are!"

"Yes, no doubt, by compulsion, and because I cannot help myself. But it is in vain that I renew my sacrifice, and pretend that I am resigned, when every day and every moment I perceive that this is not true. I should like to get up and run, especially when I am being teased, as I am to-day."

"And who is teasing you?"

"Do you not see this sunbeam come to play upon my bed, on purpose to mock me, telling me how beautiful the weather is, but that I must stay in prison? And those birds, singing to call me out of doors, when I cannot leave my cage. Do you not hear them?"

Sometimes, when her crises of agony from the terrible shooting pains came on, one of her companions would say: "Courage, Sister Marie-Bernard; do not lose this opportunity for heroic resignation."

"No, indeed; I lose so many, that I mean to make the most of this. After all, there is no refusing it, since it comes from God."

The innocent and child-like gaiety of her disposition was proverbial at St. Gildard, and was one of the most prominent features of her character. But there is no rule without exception, and it happened that under certain circumstances a shadow of deep though temporary melancholy fell upon her. Was it that the spectacle of the miseries of earth saddened one to whom had been granted a glimpse of paradise? Was it the sense of exile from the home of the blessed, which she was longing to enter? We cannot tell. We only know what one of her sisters in religion told us.

"Sometimes," she said, "though very rarely, Barnadette appeared so grave that one would have supposed her pressed down beneath the burden of her sufferings.

"One day, when we were walking together, she appeared to be full of thought, absorbed and depressed, and it was in vain that I endeavoured to rouse her. I began to fear lest some cloud of sadness might be overshadowing the limpid candour of her soul. 'Do you not remember,'

I said, ‘the promises of the Blessed Virgin, and what you with your own eyes have seen ? Do you forget it ?’

“‘Forget it !’ she repeated, with indescribable emphasis, as she raised her head, with vivacity, ‘It is there !’ And she placed her hand on her brow, with a gesture of unshaken fidelity and love ; then closed her eyes a moment, as if the better to look back into her memory, whilst I watched her with emotion, as she stood motionless and recollected, her hand still raised, and while pressed on her forehead at the same time pointing to heaven : we were both silent, and entered the chapel to pray.”

“Have you observed,” said another sister, “that she never looks at statues ? These representations, so coarse and clumsy in her eyes, affect her painfully, and if any one obliges her to look at one, ‘Oh !’ she exclaims, ‘Oh ! how ugly it is !’”

“Once,” said Sister A., “I was with her in the little parlour, where there is an engraving of Raphael’s celebrated picture of the Transfiguration. I showed it to her, explaining that connoisseurs considered it an admirable work ; but she seemed very little impressed by the merits I pointed out. ‘If you were an artist,’ I said, ‘and had the necessary talent, would it be possible for you to paint the portrait of our Blessed Lady ? Can you see her in your memory plainly enough for that ?’ She sighed, and said : ‘Sometimes I can, *but not always.*’ ‘Ah ! little one !’ I answered, laughing, ‘that is when you are not good !’”

She was assuredly always good. At the same time, as one of the sisters told us, it would be a great mistake to suppose that nature in her possessed no hastiness or inequalities, although repressed by grace.

"Sister Marie-Bernard," she said, "has a simple, prompt, and logical mind, which inclines her to a ready repartee when she is conscious of being in the right,—a repartee always graphic, happily expressed, just, and striking. She excels in the art of *driving the nail* into her opponent, but she drives it in with a golden hammer. Her answers, quick and to the point, are almost always as charming as they are irreproachable.

"And yet it is these for which she often blames herself with bitter repentance and anguish, grieving to have given, or at least to have risked giving, pain, and hastening to beg forgiveness of any whose feelings she fears to have wounded. Excessive, perhaps, in this, she becomes a prey to melancholy and anxiety, her strong resentment against herself plunging her into sudden gloom.

"Is there in this some whim or contrariety? some weakness or imperfection? I do not know. God alone can judge; but this defect, if it be one, and it appears like one at times,—this side of her character may be permitted by God as a partial veil over our beloved sister, lest we should admire her too much, as one raised above the earth, and to be regarded as an angel from paradise. To God alone be glory without spot or shadow! It is also by this means that our

sister may be preserved in the deep humility which makes her look upon herself as the last and most unworthy amongst us all. Never has the bloom of this soul, chosen from among others by our Lady of Lourdes, been touched by pride or self-conceit."

XI.

"Is it true?" it was one day asked; "Is it true that she is kept in ignorance, and that she herself wishes to remain in absolute ignorance, of all that is going on at Lourdes? Is it true that, having finished her mission, she is become indifferent to the continuation of the work which God founded by her hands, or to the memory of the persons and things she quitted on her entrance into the religious life?"

"It must not for a moment be supposed that such was the case," was the answer; "the exact contrary being the truth. She loved her family, especially her dear parents, of whom she always spoke with pious respect: she loved Mgr. Peyramale with a most deep and affectionate veneration. Without putting her to the pain of reading of her own celebrity, Providence pointed out the means of making her acquainted with every detail of M. Henri Lasserre's book relating to her own history and that of the apparitions, in order that she might corroborate them by her own irrefutable testimony. Neither was she ignorant of certain legends that were spread abroad, and against

which she protested as inventions. She knew of the glory of our Lady of Lourdes, the basilica, the multitudes, the processions, the miracles, and took the warmest interest in the building of the orphanage of the Sisters of Nevers in front of the holy grotto."

XII.

Had Bernadette listened only to her inclination, she also would assuredly have gone with the Christian multitudes to kneel at the blessed spot which to her, more than to any other, was full of ineffable memories. Every day without fail she made her pilgrimage thither in spirit, for her heart was constantly at the rocks of Massabielle, and gladly would she have accompanied it, but she knew that in spite of any efforts she might make to conceal herself, and go thither unperceived, this place of prayer would be for herself personally a place of publicity and honour, and she therefore silenced her natural desire to revisit the place which had been to her as the gate of heaven, where the queen of humility had appeared to her.

When Mgr. Ladoue was to be consecrated Bishop of Nevers, in the basilica of Lourdes, one of the reverend mothers, whose duty it was there to represent the community, said to Sister Maria-Bernard: "Will you come with us?"

"No," she answered, sighing; "but how gladly I would if I were a little bird!"

And in saying this she envied, not the swift wings of the lark or the swallow, but the power of seeing without being seen, and of hiding in the foliage from inquisitive eyes.

More recently, in 1876, at the time of the coronation of our Lady of Lourdes, she charged the Abbé Perreau, a venerable priest of Nevers, to be the bearer of her prayers before the sacred grotto, to which her eyes had bid their final adieu, but to which the gaze of her heart so often turned.

A few days afterwards he recounted to her all the splendours of which he had been a witness,—the thirty-five bishops, assembled to crown, in the name of the supreme head of the Church, the image of the mysterious Virgin who had appeared to herself; the innumerable pilgrims; the faith of the Christian people; the miracles wrought by the water of the sacred spring and invocation of our Lady of Lourdes.

Bernadette, her eyes sparkling with the liveliest joy and emotion, listened with pious avidity, while the varying expression of her speaking countenance exhibited the feelings and the delight of her heart.

"Ah, my dear sister," said the priest, as he concluded his recital, "what a happiness it would have been for you, could you but have been there."

"For me!" she answered. "And what should I have done in the midst of all those multitudes?"

And oh! how much better it was for me in my little corner in the infirmary."

"Admirable words," remarked the Abbé Perreau, "which revealed all the humility of her soul. For our Lady of Lourdes universal glory; for herself suffering and sickness, and to be forgotten in the shadow of the cloister."

Never of her own accord, or without being questioned, did Bernadette speak of the apparitions with which she had been favoured, except once or twice only, when an allusion escaped her, a momentary allusion to that of which the memory was ever present in the depth of her heart.

A Sister of Nevers, who had been present at the holy festivities and miraculous cures at Lourdes, described them to her with the same enthusiasm as the Abbé Perreau.

"Only think," she said, "of all the beautiful things which are daily taking place at the grotto, and you, alas! see nothing of them."

"Do not pity me, sister," answered Bernadette, "what I have seen there is far more beautiful."

But scarcely had she uttered the words when a bright blush suffused her cheeks, as when a passing breath of air lifts for a moment the veil of a modest virgin.

XIII.

Had she at times, since the apparitions of our Lady of Lourdes, any mysterious communication with the invisible world? If thus it were, Sister Marie-Bernard kept them all sacred in her heart, as one who keeps the secret of a king.

Nevertheless, with regard to this matter two incidents have been related to us, which furnish much food for reflection. We give them as they were told to us.

She had a great affection for Sister D. The two had embarked together in a certain commerce, traffic, or negociation, in which Sister Marie-Bernard considered that she realized important profits. This idea of lucre would probably occasion surprise if our description ended here: let us hasten to complete it.

Sister D. lived in the hospital, where she tended the sick, while poor Bernadette was stretched on her bed, or confined to her easy chair, at the mother house.

"Here I am, ill again," she said to her friend, who had come to visit her; "always in the infirmary, always good for nothing; taken care of, and able to take care of nobody."

She felt severely what she called her uselessness. "Ah! God did well not to leave it to me to choose the kind of life I was to lead. Most certainly I should never have chosen the helpless state to which it is His will that I

should be reduced. It seemed to me that I was born for activity, and to be always in movement, and His will keeps me motionless. My delight would be to sing hymns and psalms and canticles, the praises of Jesus and Mary; but though God has given me a voice, it is His will that I should be mute. When I sing, the spitting of blood returns, and singing is therefore forbidden me. Then, I should have so loved to be always able to nurse the sick in the hospices, to teach the children, to have charge of the infant school. This is my attraction, my desire, my longing. Alas! I am gaining no merit, and am altogether useless."

And with eyes full of sadness, she added: "Dear Sister D. you are charitable; then have pity upon me. Let us go into trade."

"What trade?"

"One in which I shall gain everything, and you nothing.....In this business I have no scruple, for you are very rich, and I am very poor. You can easily afford to lose a little, to put me into easier circumstances."

"Well, but—"

"Well, but, let us make an exchange of our merits. On such-and-such days I will, before God, give you the merit of my paltry prayers and sufferings, and you in return shall make over to me the merit of your good work,—your day as a hospital sister."

"Most willingly," said Sister D., glad at heart, and concealing her joy, like a crafty merchant, profiting by the simplicity of another to get a splendid bargain.

But almost immediately afterwards her conscience pricked her, and she said, "For my day in the hospital I will only accept one *Memorare* from you."

How this partnership answered we shall only know when it will be given us to know what is written in the great and golden Book of God.

The two "partners" had, then, become intimate friends.

Sister D. had a brother-in-law, full of admirable natural qualities, a perfect husband, an excellent father, but, unhappily, careless about his religious practices, to the great sorrow of his wife and daughter, who were both very pious. Both had the greatest confidence in the prayers of Bernadette, and had often sent a request that she would invoke Our Lady of Lourdes that this worthy man might become regular in his duties as a Christian.

Now, one evening in May, without any suggestion on the subject having been made to him, he announced his intention of attending the service for the month of Mary. Great was the joy of his wife and daughter. But, a few moments afterwards, as they were getting ready, they heard a sudden cry which made them tremble, and hastening to ascertain the cause, found this beloved husband and father struggling under a frightful attack of apoplexy, in which he expired, without any recovery of consciousness, and long before the priest had time to arrive.

To the overwhelming grief at this sudden death was added, in the sorrowing hearts of those left behind, the most poignant anxiety as

to the salvation of the soul that, on so brief a summons, had passed away. The daughter was almost out of her senses, and could not sleep or rest for the sting of the incessant dread lest her father should have fallen into the abyss of endless pain and eternal separation.

One day, Sister D. received a letter, wild in its despair, and in which her poor niece said, "In the name of God I entreat you to go to Sister Marie-Bernard. *She must, she absolutely must tell you where is my father's soul.*"

"This is insanity," was naturally the thought of Sister D. when she read these words; and she took good care not to acquit herself of this impossible commission.

Another letter arrived before long, still more urgent than the preceding: the niece never slept, fever was coming on, what was to be done? The kind Sister was in the most painful perplexity.

On going that day to the mother house, she met Bernadette, who, being convalescent, was walking in the garden, and came up to her asking, "Have you any news of your afflicted ones?"

"Alas! yes. Their anxiety as to the salvation of him whom they mourn is affecting their reason. My unfortunate niece is becoming insane."

"Insane!"

"Yes; and I cannot confess to you to what a degree: no, I dare not speak it."

"Come! Courage! tell me your trouble. What form does her insanity take?"

"Well, in her despair and madness, she has

the fixed idea that I should come to you, my poor Sister Marie-Bernard, *that you should tell me where is her father's soul.*"

At this surprising statement the face of Bernadette expressed an astonishment that amounted to stupefaction. But besides this, there was also a slight shrug of the shoulders, and, in spite of the sadness of the circumstances, almost an inclination to laugh at the absurdity of such a demand addressed to her.

"Ah, really!" she exclaimed, in the tone one uses with regard to something quite unheard of, and out of all imaginable bounds.

But all at once the appearance of her countenance changed, and a profound stillness came over her. She stopped in her walk, her eyes closed, and she remained thus motionless for some moments, a living image of contemplation and prayer.

Sister D., breathless at this strange spectacle, felt the tremor pass over her which is caused by the mysterious presence of the supernatural. For a time she did not dare to break the silence, but at last her anxiety impelled her to speak.

"Well," she said, "what answer must I send my niece?"

"You will tell her to set her mind at rest from all anxiety. Let her be comforted and pray. *Her father will go to heaven.*"

From that day, after such words as these, which were to her as a voice from above, the young girl completely recovered her tranquillity.

That the companion of Sister Marie-Bernard may have taken as a direct revelation the expression of a firm hope in God's mercy, is doubtless possible; but if Bernadette indeed uttered this affirmation on the fate of a departed person, it is no trifling fact, and gives strong reason to conclude that for a moment the unfathomable mystery was unveiled before her.

Another time, when confined to her bed, and very suffering, she received a visit from a Sister of Nevers who was a stranger to the mother house. This religious, after conversing for a few moments, took up some needlework, and remained in the infirmary sewing in silence, while her thoughts travelled to subjects evidently painful and saddening, for two tears rolled down her cheeks. Bernadette perceived them.

"Sister, why do you weep?"

"Alas! because I have troubles."

"Troubles? so has everybody. *But you have such and such troubles.*"

And with the utmost clearness and precision, as if she were reading from an open book, Sister Marie-Bernard mentioned in detail, to her astonished companion, the whole cause of the secret anxieties which were afflicting her heart, touching upon family griefs and cares which she could not possibly have learnt from any natural source.

She ended by saying, " You must write home and say so-and-so, and then all will be arranged."

This counsel was followed, and restored peace to a troubled household.

We received this account from the Sister herself, to whom Bernadette had given so striking a proof of second-sight.

XIV.

From the few scattered traits we have gleaned from her religious life, and of which, almost without order, we have formed an incomplete sheaf to which we may one day add any forgotten ears; from all the memories attaching to her youthful existence at the time of the Apparitions, and from these various anecdotes, it will be seen, or imagined, how bright and alert, how exquisite and charming a nature was that of the child beloved by Our Lady of Lourdes. Before arriving at the great sufferings and sublime patience of her last days, we have endeavoured to exhibit something of her amiable, lively and joyous disposition, full, at the same time, of fervent love and solid virtue.

It is not well to misrepresent in any way types pleasing to the Heart of God. When these historic types are falsified, so also, by the same process, is the religion of a large number, who receive from it inaccurate notions of true virtue and sanctity, and these false impressions may be productive of much harm.

From a meddlesome and restless zeal, which

labours to transfigure everything, and which only manages, alas! to disfigure everything, a certain pious imbecility or insipid piety has at times attempted to represent, for the edification of the faithful, a conventional Bernadette, characterless and indifferent, her eyes obliquely downcast, old and puritanical from her infancy. This is not even a caricature, for a caricature implies at least some amount of resemblance; but it is a purely legendary invention, which it is the right and duty of historical truth to cast aside without false pity.

We have already mentioned in our former book, what we have just now repeated, and what a whole community is ready to testify, that no creature living had more life and grace, even in a human sense, a more personal physiognomy, a quicker intelligence, or a more characteristic individuality than she upon whom, at the grotto of Lourdes, the eyes of the Queen of Heaven had rested, and who, full of amiability, piety, and probity, lived for thirteen years amid the Sisters of Nevers, advancing more and more towards religious perfection, and captivating her dear companions as twenty years ago she had attracted the predilection of the Immaculate Virgin. All truly loved her, and she was the only one who found nothing in herself to love.

Realizing in its fulness the ideal type of the congregation she had chosen as her family, and giving herself up wholly and unreservedly to the divine influence, Bernadette, as Sister Marie-

Bernard, developed and advanced in sanctity, free from any discordant note, and learning to suffer with the patience of a martyr, and to pray with the fervour of an angel; she constantly gained in the order of grace without ever losing in the order of nature, and grew in every virtue without sacrificing the due relative proportion of any.

Such was Sister Marie-Bernard, such the favoured child who, aided by the great Abbé Peyramale, was found to have impressed on the world the most extensive religious movement that has been witnessed since the crusades.

"She is a prey to hallucination, she is an idiot, a lunatic," cried the enemies of God, around this feebleness which was so puissant. But what to her were these vain clamours? She felt no more troubled or humiliated by them than she had formerly felt any temptation, in the town of Lourdes, to vanity from the enthusiasm of Christians, or at the rocks of Massabielle had been touched by pride on account of the extraordinary graces she received, and the wondrous things which God had accomplished by her.

Have you ever, on the flowery turf of a meadow, or in the depth of some forest, lingered on the banks of some deep-flowing and limpid stream? Its waters are clear and pure, its course rapid and calm. By day the sun, piercing through the leafy domes of the trees, caresses its rippling silver; by night the stars shimmer in its flood. What swiftness is there in these wavelets as, playing with gentle murmur, they

press on in close succession, and at the same time with what placidity ! It would seem that these living yet tranquil waters flow, through shady solitudes, directly from the depth of those inaccessible gorges which are the abode of eternal repose.

But, no. A few leagues higher, this rural stream, without interrupting its onward flow, but on the contrary, in following its regular course, has, without effort, as it passed the cities of men, turned mighty wheels, raised gigantic weights, and set a multitude of people in movement. And then, this done, plunging into a denser shade and deeper peacefulness, its quiet waves have flowed on unweariedly through woods and plains, pure, limpid, and untroubled as before.

And thus here below was the life of Bernadette.

Do the particulars respecting her which we have collected, the wondrous episodes of her childhood, the pure, sweet memories of her religious life, the heroism which could even be gay in the midst of severe suffering ; do all these details furnish so many indications of sanctity ? Do these different rays combine to form the glory with which the tradition of the Church has always surrounded the brow of the elect ? We do not know ; and the sovereign authority of the Father of the faithful has alone the right to decide the matter.

In any case, since we are speaking on the

subject of light and of visible signs of predestination, we may be permitted to mention a fact which Mgr. Peyramale repeatedly mentioned, but which, for reasons easy to be understood, he would not permit to be printed during the life-time of Bernadette.

It was at the time of the administrative persecutions, and, if we mistake not, during the August of 1858, when the Curé of Lourdes had already, as every one knows, displayed an indomitable energy in defending the divine work and the privileged child who was its instrument.

One Sunday the Abbé Peyramale was distributing to his people the Bread of Life, when he suddenly perceived an aureole of exceeding brightness over the head of one of the persons kneeling at the altar, and at the same time a heavenly ray darting from the sacred ciborium united itself to this glory.

" You know," said the Curé of Lourdes to M. Crosnier, (who related this circumstance in the *Semaine Religieuse* of Nevers;) " you know that we are recommended, when giving Holy Communion, not to let our attention be drawn to the faithful who receive it. I confess that I do not pay any regard to this recommendation, and desiring to know who the Christian might be whose brow was encircled by this nimbus, I looked at her, and not without deep emotion recognized that it was Bernadette."*

* We relate this fact as we have ourselves heard it related by Mgr. Peyramale. It did not at all determine his belief, already acquired before this date, in the reality of the apparitions, but it was a great encouragement to him in the struggles which he had to maintain.

Happy the child whose brow was illumined by this mark of predestination ! Happy the priest whose purity of heart was such as to permit his mortal eyes to behold this heavenly sign !

XV.

During the whole course of her religious life the thoughts of Sister Marie-Bernard frequently visited her native place. Not only the holy grotto, but the lowly and paternal roof where she had left her beloved family ; the cemetery where, since her departure, her parents had been laid ; the poor church where she had so often communicated ; the borrowed presbytery where, in glorious poverty, dwelt the patriarch of our Lady of Lourdes ; the hospice of the sisters, where she had at first been a scholar, and later a postulant ; the whole town, in which she was born, and where dwelt the friends of her childhood, and the companions of her early days.

When the Abbé Perreau went to Lourdes for the coronation of our Lady's statue, Sister Marie-Bernard gave him an urgent commission.

"Tell Mgr. Peyramale that *every day I think of him*, and that I ask his holy benediction."

The Curé of Lourdes was in the midst of troubles when he received this message. He spoke of Bernadette with emotion. "Take her my blessing," he said to the Abbé Perreau, "and assure her,—assure her well,—that I remember that she is always my child."

On every occasion that the writer of these pages went to Nevers, the first question of Bernadette was always about the Curé Peyramale. The image of the apostle of our Lady of Lourdes was no more absent from her mind than was the thought of St. Jerome from the heart of St. Paula, or of St. François de Sales from the memory of St. Jeanne de Chantal.

Great was her joy when we told her how Pope Pius IX. had solemnly proclaimed his high sense of the services of the Curé Peyramale, not only by conferring upon him the title and honours of "Protonotary Apostolic," but also, and particularly, by addressing to him a brief couched in exceptional terms. How her whole person listened, how her face beamed, when we repeated to her the very words of this pontifical brief, in which the Vicar of Jesus Christ did justice to the heroic priest of our Lady of Lourdes.

"This," we said to her, "is how the Pope has spoken: 'When among the labourers in the field of the Gospel any are found distinguished by the brightness of their piety, uprightness, and courage, as well as by their wisdom, prudence, and learning, it is pleasing to us, according to time and circumstances, to honour them by special and personal tokens of our pontifical munificence. And this we do in order that they may not be as lamps hidden under a bushel, but that, on the contrary, and more especially in these days, when impiety is waging a criminal war against God and His saints, they may shine forth with greater splendour, and as an example

to all others. *You, beloved son, are of this number.''**

Bernadette was greatly moved, and her tearful eyes still questioned us. She wished to know the smallest details of what had taken place at Lourdes on this occasion, and we had, therefore, to give a full description. Amongst other things, we told her how these unexampled honours and dignities had at first called forth from the humble, and at the same time rugged, spirit of the Curé Peyramale, a sudden storm of displeasure and resistance, which the bishop, who was the bearer of the brief, only succeeded in allaying by a species of *coup d'état*.†

Sister Marie-Bernard, touched and happy on account of the great honour done to the Curé of Lourdes, at the same time laughed like a child at the extraordinary confusion into which the humility of this man of granite had thrown him, when like an avalanche these official grandeurs came suddenly upon him, and at the singular episodes to which his confusion had given rise.

We have lingered all the more willingly over these recollections, this interview being the last that we ever had with this privileged child of God. The liveliest joy and most expansive pleasure had evidently been excited in her truly filial soul by what we had told her respecting the Curé of Lourdes, and again she smiled at us

* Brief addressed to the Curé Marie-Dominique Peyramale, *Doyen of Lourdes*, by his holiness Pope Pius IX., of the date of March 3rd, 1874.

† We are relating, in a volume now in the press, and entitled *Le Curé de Lourdes, Mgr. Peyramale*, this curious scene, which to insert here would make too long a digression.

when we bade her *au revoir*. It was we also, alas! who, some years later, were to let fall on her heart, although from afar off, the heaviest blow that it had ever known, and cause her bitterest tears to flow.

On the 7th and 8th of September, 1877, the vigil and feast of our Blessed Lady's Nativity, we sent two telegrams from Lourdes to Nevers: the first to announce that Mgr. Peyramale was in danger, and ask for prayers; the second to say that he was dead.

The two telegrams reached St. Gildard almost at the same time.

"It was on the day of our Blessed Lady's Nativity that I received the crushing news," wrote Bernadette, in a letter which was given to us, and which we carefully preserve. "At nine o'clock my dear Sister Nathalie came to me in the tribune, saying that a telegram had just been received, dated the previous evening, to announce that Monsieur le Curé was as ill as possible. Then, on the same day arrived the second, announcing his death. *It would be impossible to tell you what I suffered.*"

"It would indeed be impossible to say what she suffered at that moment," said Sister Nathalie to us afterwards. "You can have no idea of the impression made upon her by this death."

"From the time the first telegram arrived, she never ceased praying, and was still in the chapel when I went to tell her that Mgr. Peyramale was no more in this world. She only uttered a feeble cry, a moan, as of one who is

fainting, and as if her own life were passing away: '*Oh !..... Monsieur le Curé !*'

"Never did so heart-rending a cry meet my ears. She sank again on her knees, tottering and clasping her hands, crushed by the blow of this death. Her whole frame bowed down, and, as it were, fell prostrate before the altar, to offer up to God this unmeasurable sacrifice. Her shoulders were those of the victim offering itself for immolation, and she made me think of Jesus bending beneath the lash of the executioners, or the burden of the cross."

Although separated by distance, and buried in her hidden life, Sister Marie-Bernard had been well aware of the anxieties and troubles of the saintly old man.

"It seems," she wrote in the letter mentioned above, "that the anxiety he felt with regard to his new church may have hastened his death. I should not be at all surprised if this were the case; he had so much at heart the work which he had so well begun. We must adore the designs of God, since nothing happens without His permission."

And some months afterwards, when some one said to her: "Dear Sister Marie-Bernard, pray to the Blessed Virgin that I may at least complete the unfinished sanctuary of Mgr. Peyramale," her eyes filled with tears, as she answered sorrowfully: "Do you think then that for one single day I can forget it ?"

It was in fact one of her constant pre-occupations. She thought of this new church, founded by her venerated father to shelter the worship

of his people, and could not comprehend the amazing amount of difficulty and opposition which the devil stirred up against this apostolic work.

XVI.

So long as the Curé Peyramale was alive, Bernadette, when ill, had always been heard to say with great decision and certainty to those around her, whom she saw alarmed on her account: "*I shall not die yet.*"*

But from the day that this great servant of our Lady of Lourdes had entered his true country, her language was no longer the same. "And now," she said, "it will soon be my turn." When once speaking of this to one of her companions, she added: "But first I must cause another death."

She meant the death of self, the immolation of all the wretched remains of the old Adam, which must precede the resurrection and the life. And thus passed another year, during which her fervour appeared to be redoubled.

Twenty years had elapsed since Bernadette had contemplated our Lady of Lourdes at the rocks of Massabielle; twelve since she had crossed the threshold of the mother-house of the Sisters of Nevers, and hidden her celebrity

* We have already mentioned this expression as being familiar to her in "*Our Lady of Lourdes,*" Book XI. It occurs also in a letter to her sister, of June 25, 1876.

beneath the humility of their holy habit; and eleven since she had pronounced her simple vows in religion; the hour was come to consummate the eternal alliance with the heavenly Bridegroom, and receive the unfading crown.

On the 22nd of September, 1878, the feast of our Lady of Sorrows, Sister Marie-Bernard solemnly pronounced her perpetual vows in the chapel of her community, dedicated to the Sacred Heart, and in which she had so often made the Way of the Cross, following one by one, with fervent love, all the stations of our Redeemer on His way to death. And some weeks later, on the 11th of December, three days after the feast of the Immaculate Conception, she was seized by violent sufferings, which obliged her to re-enter the infirmary.

On seeing her this time, Dr. Robert Saint-Cyr shook his head, and gave small hope of recovery. "This may last a few months," he said, "but she is not far from the end of her pains."

Bernadette no longer replied to the apprehension she saw expressed around her, by her former re-assuring words. She looked up to heaven, and awaited the hour.

From the time of the apparitions, her whole existence had been a constant alternation between indifferent health and maladies of a very acute character.

God, like the refiner of gold, had by turns plunged her into the furnace and withdrawn her from it, trying her anew in the ardent flame of suffering, so as to leave among the dead ashes

all alloy and dross, all earthly element, and by degrees set free the royal metal in all its integrity and brightness. And Sister Marie-Bernard, understanding the work of the Divine Artificer, received, not only with resignation, but with gratitude and love, all the anguish inflicted for her future good by the paternal hand of her Creator.

XVII.

Under the imminence of the increasing danger the community were in trouble and alarm. With regard to her who, they feared, was passing from them, the dear sisters related to one another, in the gardens or the cloisters, a thousand charming details which came back to the memory of their minds and hearts. It was like the gentle humming of bees in the shelter of the busy hive: a tender moaning and a plaintive note among these daughters of heaven labouring at the honey of earth.

Would that these murmured narratives, these pious memories, thus exchanged among those consecrated virgins, might have reached our ear. What treasures must they not have been, of edification for the soul, and delight for the understanding! Have they then been borne away for ever by the wind, beneath the cloistered arcades or the overarching trees; borne away as the fugitive melody of the organ, or the song of a bird on the wing? Perhaps not.

The good Sisters of Nevers regard us with

affection, as the truthful narrator of the apparitions of our Lady of Lourdes, the faithful historian whom Bernadette honoured with her Christian and particular sympathy.

"All visits," she said, about two years ago, before the death of the Curé of Lourdes, "are an infliction to me; and, excepting those of my own family, there are only three persons to see whom I would run to the parlour with joy, and these are Mgr. Peyramale, the Abbé Pomian, and M. Henri Lasserre.

And why was it, venerated sister, that for me, so unworthy, you made this kind and honourable exception? Doubtless it was because, in the course of our repeated conversations on the apparitions of Mary and the marvellous episodes of your childhood, you felt that by the same love of truth which animated your pure heart my miserable heart was also kindled. You knew that I had loyally and accurately recorded all things concerning them to the ears of men. Aloof from all conflict, struggle, and polemics, you were nevertheless aware that I energetically defended against every attempt at legendary exaggeration the inviolable integrity of this supernatural history, and repudiated all earthly alloy, all worldly admixture in our heavenly Mother's sacred work. I know also that during the closing days of your mortal existence you again inquired after him who at this moment guides his pen to speak of you; and that, in the hearts of your sisters you have left him the

Christian affection of your own heart as a heritage.

And thus it is that, although I was not present at these intimate conversations among your sisters and mothers, they have revealed them to me with the cordial freedom customary between trusted friends, and those bequeathed to us by the affection and esteem of some beloved one no longer in this world.

While condensing the form without altering the spirit, and reproducing them as much as possible in the living verity of their physiognomy, we devoutly trust that we have faithfully collected the several details of these scattered conversations, interrupted by prayer, by work, by passing hours, and by successive suns, but which in reality made up but one conversation, on the one anxiety of all these souls.

Let us then again listen to these echoes from the house of the Lord, while, during her last days among them, the sorrowing companions of Bernadette talked with her, as of old the virgins of Israel with the daughter of Jephthah before she was to die.

"She does not go to heaven," said one of the sisters, "she runs, she flies; and already her feet no longer touch the earth, nor would she give even one backward glance."

"No, indeed," answered another; she loves the painful way by which she mounts, well knowing whither this rugged path is leading, and above all, knowing that in it she is following Jesus Christ. When the other day I witnessed her cruel sufferings, the words escaped

me: 'I cannot at all understand, Sister Marie-Bernard, why you do not ask to be cured.'

"'And after that,' she answered quickly: 'The good God would come and say: '*Do you see this little religious who wishes to suffer nothing for Me, who have suffered so much for her?*' No, indeed! no, indeed!'"

"I was one day by her side," said another, "thinking of Paradise, where I longed to be. 'Dear Sister Marie-Bernard,' I said, 'you must ask very earnestly that I may die soon.' Her answer came like an arrow. '*And the others?*' she exclaimed, in the tone of a child who saw some one trying to seize the whole cake.

"Her little sayings," continued the same sister, "have often a charming grace. Yesterday, when I was rendering her some small service, turning her in bed, or giving her something to drink, she looked at me gratefully, and said: 'I am better cared for than a princess.' 'A princess,' I answered, 'would perhaps have as much of our care, but assuredly she would not have so much of our heart.' 'Oh, yes,' she resumed, 'I am better attended to than a princess, because,' she added, smiling, 'I am the spouse of the great King.'"

"Poor little one," said Sister E., "what torture she endures, and what merit she has, lively and impressionable as she is, in never losing her heroic patience. Her sufferings are fearful. These last days, her chest, torn by her cough, and oppressed to suffocation, was, as it

were, on fire; her poor frame, almost in tatters from the innumerable dressings, and by so long a confinement to the bed, was all painful and bleeding; the caries in the bones caused the most frightful shooting pains in the knee, which it is gnawing away. 'Courage, sister,' said her confessor; 'remember the promises of Mary. Heaven is at the end.'

"'Yes,' she answered, 'But the end is long in coming.' And, writhing in the furnace of her torment, she could not at times restrain herself from crying out.

"To strengthen herself against all evil, and every temptation to revolt, she stretched out her arms like a cross, uniting herself in will to the sufferings of the divine lover of souls. 'O my God,' she would say, 'I offer all to Thee! O my Jesus, I love Thee; how I love Thee.' And when some respite came, she reproached herself for the involuntary cries and groans which nature had extorted from her, and with joined hands would beg forgiveness of us all for the scandal she had given, after having so edified us, and beg God's pardon for her fault, after the practice of sublime virtue.

"'My poor sister,' I said to her one day, 'you are there, upon the cross.' 'Yes,' she answered, 'but I am there with Jesus. Do not pay attention to my contortions. I suffer, *but I am glad to suffer*. All this is good for paradise. *What God wills, as He wills, and as much as He wills.* I give myself up to Him, and place my joy in being the victim of the Heart of Jesus.'"

XVIII.

Our Lady of Lourdes manifestly assisted her in this great passage, holding her privileged child by the hand, as she neared the gates of heaven. The incomparable Virgin, whom she had contemplated at the rocks of Massabielle, she was now about to find again, and behold for ever in the land of unclouded light, where awaited her those who had gone before,—her mother first, then her father, and lastly the good Curé Peyramale.

She often thought of them all, as well as those of her family whom she was leaving here below, of her companions, of her sisters in the religious life, and prayed for each and for all. Some of the latter, foreseeing that her end was near, charged her in all simplicity with their messages for heaven, and recommended to her future prayers relations, souls in peril, and a thousand spiritual interests.

“Never fear,” she answered, “I will forget nothing; I will do all your commissions; but for your part, be sure that you remember me.”

XIX.

She had a special devotion to St. Joseph. A little chapel dedicated to him in the middle of the garden at St. Gildard was one of her favourite retreats. She loved its solitude and silence, and went there frequently for meditation and prayer.

This year she was unable to repair thither, according to her custom, on the feast of the Spouse of Mary, but she invoked him fervently. And when next day she was asked by the Abbé Febvre, chaplain to the community, what special favour she had asked of St. Joseph, she answered: "I asked him for the grace of a good death."

From the firm and serious tone in which this answer was given, the thought occurred to the priest that she had a mysterious presentiment that the solemn event was near.

On Friday, the 28th of March, 1879, two days before Passion Sunday, Sister Marie-Bernard was in great prostration and suffering. The apprehensions of affection and the anticipations of science judged alike as to the issue of the crisis. The reverend mother, the dear sisters assembled round Bernadette, the physician who attended her, all thought that the time of departure was at hand. But if the body seemed to be in the last extremity, the spirit shone forth clear and unclouded. In this breaking lamp the light, steady and pure, still beamed in all its brightness.

It was therefore judged that the time was come for the administration of the last succours of the Church.

She made some slight difficulty about receiving Extreme Unction, and for an instant, with a sort of playful contradiction, refused it.

"No, no; do not let Extreme Unction be given me yet."

"And why not?"

"Why? Because I have been cured every time that I have had it, getting better from that very moment. This will be the fourth time, and I do not want to receive it unless to some purpose,—to die, and not begin again to live."

But it was urged upon her, and then, obedient to the last, she overcame her feeling, to submit to the maternal authority which pressed her.

When the holy Viaticum was brought to her, she turned towards the Rev. Mother Adelaïde Dons, and the other religious kneeling around her bed of pain, and in a voice, the strength and energy of which, considering her state of utter weakness, were astonishing, she pronounced these humble words:

"My dear mother, I ask your forgiveness for all the trouble I have given you by my repeated unfaithfulness in the religious life; and of you also, my dear sisters, I equally beg pardon for all the bad example I have given you. Pray for me."

This Extreme Unction was not the term of her life, but may be said to have been the commencement of her long agony, which lasted still almost three weeks.

On this day, or shortly afterwards, the Abbé Febvre addressed to her exhortations suitable to the dying.

"Courage, my dear sister, let the great sacrifice be generously made."

Bernadette turned her clear and limpid gaze with naïve inquiry upon the priest, and with a slight expression of surprise asked: "What sacrifice, father? what sacrifice?"

"My good sister," he answered, surprised in his turn, "I mean the sacrifice of your life."

When he said this, Bernadette smiled sweetly, lifting up her eyes to her heavenly country.

"But, father, this is no sacrifice at all," she said, simply. "No, it is no sacrifice to quit a life in which one finds it so difficult not to offend the good God, and in which there are so many crosses."

"Assuredly not," said the chaplain, at once following to their height the sentiments of this admirable soul. "It cannot be a sacrifice to be called away to enjoy for ever the eternal splendours of God. And you, my sister, although you have never contemplated the face of the Most High, yet you know *something* of what divine beauty must be."

She closed her eyes, as if to recal to mind and inwardly gaze upon the ineffaceable vision.

"Yes," she resumed, after a short silence, "and it is this remembrance which comforts me, and encourages my heart to hope."

When the bells of Holy Saturday were ringing, some one said to her: "Sister, after the Passion, Easter comes. Everything recovers life; and you too will get better."

"My passion," answered Bernadette, "will only finish at my death; it will last to my entrance into eternity."

And then a crisis seized her. Her poor, worn, and emaciated frame was contracted by pain. She stretched her arms out cross-wise, lovingly grasping in her hand the crucifix, image of the sufferings of the Beloved. Then, putting it to her lips, she kissed it with reverent devotion.

"I wish it would enter into my heart, that I might feel it there constantly, but my hands are restless in spite of myself. Let it be fastened to me," she added, "and bound on very tightly, that I may always feel the image of Jesus there."

And her dear sisters, obedient to her holy desire, put bands round her waist, and fixed over her heart the sacred sign of her crucified Redeemer.

The religious were kneeling by her bed.

"Dear sister, we are praying God to relieve and comfort you."

"No, no," answered Bernadette with vivacity, and in the eager tone of a miser who will not be robbed of any part of his treasure. "No: ask for me only strength and patience. No relief, no consolation; nothing here, but all for heaven."

XX.

Nevertheless, no soul, however pure or purified it may be, can approach death without trembling, and without being, for some moments at least, a prey to extreme anguish. Vague

and icy terrors, the snares of the serpent of darkness, await her on the awful threshold which marks the frontier of time and eternity.

On Easter Monday Sister Marie-Bernard felt the chilling breath of fear pass over her.

"I am afraid," she murmured. "I am afraid. I have received so many graces. Ah, how I tremble for not having profited by them as I ought. And now," she added, "how weak I am. With what good reason does the author of the *Imitation* say that 'We must not put off serving God until the last hour;' one is capable of so little then."

During the night, the jealous tempter who once fell from heaven endeavoured to trouble her, and make her stumble in the upward path which led her ever nearer to that paradise of delights from which he had been cast out for ever. Several times the voice of Sister Marie-Bernard was heard to say: "Satan, begone ! Satan, begone !"

"The demon tried to terrify me," she said, to the Abbé Febvre, on the Tuesday morning. "He made as if he would throw himself upon me, but I invoked the holy name of Jesus, and everything disappeared."

The evil angel never returned, and nothing was to disturb the peace of her last moments.

After this mysterious struggle and its anguish were over, she wished to make her confession once more, receive a plenary indulgence *in articulo mortis*, and partake of the Body of the Lord.

XXI.

On the Wednesday in Easter Week, the sun rose brightly, as befitted a festival, and all the priests of the Christian world, as they mounted the steps of the altar, began, in these divine words, the Introit of the Mass:

"Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!"*

And at the offertory they pronounced this text from the Psalmist:

"The Lord hath opened the doors of heaven. Alleluia. He hath given them the bread of heaven. Man did eat the bread of angels. Alleluia!"

"Alleluia! Alleluia!" Surely is not this the day when Bernadette should die? "Come, ye blessed of My Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you. Alleluia!"

She was not dying, however, when the dawn of this festival arose; and about the hour of the noon tide Angelus, when her companions, thinking that they saw alarming signs upon her features, were about to begin the last prayers: "Lord, assist me *in my last agony*," Bernadette said gently:

* *Introitus. Matt. xxv. "Venite benedicti Patris mei, percipite regnum, Alleluia: quod vobis paratum est ab origine mundi. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia."*—*Mass for Wednesday in Easter Week.*

Offert. Ps. lxx. "Portas coeli apernit Dominus.....Panem coelestem dedit eis: panem angelorum manducavit homo. Alleluia."—*Ibid.*

"This is not quite the last agony, my dear sisters. You are making me say these prayers too soon ; the moment is not yet come."

"But we are saying them now, lest when the moment is come, you may be no longer able either to say or to hear them."

"Then it is well."

And she followed the prayers with the deepest attention, and with a concentrated recollectiveness which had about it something superhuman. Her pale countenance was a motionless type of faith and prayer. Her hands clasped the crucifix with ineffable tenderness and absolute confidence, while also her look, of which nothing can depict the brightness and love, that luminous gaze, ardent and yet inexpressibly sweet, was immovably fixed on the crucifix hanging on the wall. It was the sublime spectacle of temporal death embracing eternal life.

With regard to this remarkable look, which struck all present with a religious respect, one of the witnesses of this scene, the Abbé Febvre, made to us the following suggestive observation :

"That which has been touched by the supernatural keeps its impress. Now the supernatural touched Bernadette in the sense of vision, it touched her eyes, and ever since that moment her incomparable look has preserved a special reflection of it, remarked by all who have even once seen her. But in the latter part of her sickness this reflection has become increasingly vivid, attracting more and more the attention of those around her. It is especially noticeable when she prays, when she is conversing of God,

of Jesus and Mary, when she is contemplating the image of Christ, and when any one speaks to her of the joys of heaven. It seems as if her eyes continue to gain fresh splendour in proportion as our Sister Marie-Bernard feels the veil of the flesh being taken away, which hides from her the sight of God."

As the prayers for the agonizing ended, Bernadette appeared suddenly rapt in a sort of mysterious contemplation, and her face expressed a radiant surprise which cannot be described.

Supporting herself on her poor hands, she raised herself up, as if the better to see the object upon which her gaze was fixed, and three times uttered the exclamation "Oh!" in a tone of ecstasy.

Between eleven o'clock and noon she asked to sit up, and was placed in an easy chair. She then perceived the time by the ringing of the bell, and in the spirit of consideration for others, and forgetfulness of self, which was one of her virtues and graces, she apologized to those of her companions who remained with her for thus making them late for the mid-day meal.

About one o'clock the chaplain was again summoned. She wished once more to receive absolution, once more were said the prayers for the dying, which she followed with the same fervour and attention. She had afterwards a long interval of calm. A little before three she expressed a desire that the numerous sisters who were in her room should go down as usual to the chapel, to say there the Litany of the Blessed Sacrament. The two infirmary sisters remained.

Almost immediately after, she appeared to be seized by intolerable sufferings, and being doubtless aware that the last thread of life was about to break, she wished to unite herself by indissoluble love to the divine agony of Him who died for us all.

With her failing hand she took the crucifix which lay upon her heart, and raising it to her lips, kissed twice over, tenderly and slowly, the Five most Sacred Wounds of our Saviour Jesus.

At this moment, Mother Marie-Nathalie, assistant, who was in the chapel, felt herself inwardly pressed to hasten back to Bernadette. On seeing her enter, the dying sister stretched out her arms to her, and always fearing to have failed in her duty during her thirteen years in religion, she again said to her superior : "Pardon and pray for me."

Mother Marie-Nathalie and the two infirmarians prostrated themselves in prayer, while Bernadette in a low voice joined in their invocations.

She had united herself to the sufferings of the Lord Jesus.

At three o'clock there passed over her face an indescribable expression of desolation and utter abandonment. "*Eli! Eli! Lama Sabachthani!*" Looking up to heaven, and opening her arms like a cross, she uttered a great cry :

"My God!"

An involuntary thrill of reverence and awe, the thought of the last cry of the Crucified God, passed through the religious, who while on their

knees praying, at the same time supported the outstretched arms of their dying sister who lay as on the cross.

“*Stabat Mater.*” The Mother of Sorrows, present on Golgotha, was present also, although invisibly, at the agony of this child whom she loved, and to whom she had promised happiness, not in this world, but in the world to come. And Bernadette spoke to her.

In a clear voice she repeated with emphasis: “Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for me, a poor sinner. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for me, a poor sinner.”

The memory and responsibility of the graces received had constantly alarmed her during all her life. She was humble to the last.

Feeling that life was fast ebbing away, and believing that her own efforts, prayers, and love were not sufficiently availing, she turned a supplicating look upon Sister Nathalie, and feebly murmured: “Help me.” The kneeling *Mère assistante* gave her the aid she asked,—a fervent invocation to the Mother of God.

All was not yet over. With an expressive gesture, for her breath was so far gone that her voice could no longer be heard, she said: “I am athirst.” Before touching the offered cup, she summoned all her remaining strength, and made a large sign of the cross, that solemn sign of the cross which, twenty years before, the most holy and Immaculate Virgin Mary had made before her, the first time that she appeared to her at the grotto of Lourdes.

She drank a few drops, they wiped her lips; and then, bending her head, she breathed forth her soul to God.

XXII.

And immediately at the celestial gates the choir of angels and elect doubtless repeated the divine words which the choir of the priests of the Church militant had from early morning been uttering around the earth, at the threshold of every tabernacle: "The Lord hath opened the doors of heaven. Man hath eaten the bread of angels." "Come ye blessed of My Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

The religious closed the eyes of their sleeping sister, and clothed her for the last time in her holy habit.

Docile after death as during life, her pliant frame lent itself with facility to all their loving and reverential cares.

One strange circumstance occurred. Whilst one of the eyelids remained for ever closed, the other refused to shut, and in spite of repeated efforts, it always half opened of itself, showing in the pupil, as it were, some vague reflex of mysterious life. It was the eye which had been first touched by the celestial vision, being on the side on which the blessed apparition manifested itself, on the 11th February, 1858, to the ravished gaze of Bernadette.*

* The aspect of the half-open eye is not sufficiently evident in the photographs (otherwise very successful) of Sister Marie-

XXIII.

In a very short time after the soul of Bernadette had passed away, the whole city of Nevers was stirred. It was as if the firing of cannon had announced the event simultaneously to every house. People who met in the street said to each other: "The saint is dead."

And yet scarcely any one had seen this poor religious, who had fled from human enthusiasm to bury herself in the silence and deep seclusion of a hidden life. But Nevers was conscious of its treasure. All Nevers knew that the child of benediction, to whom the Mother of God had spoken, and whose name had gone forth throughout the earth, was there, hiding her celebrity in a lowly cell.

Next morning (Thursday) the faithful thronged the gates of St. Gildard, which were opened, and the multitudes entered the convent chapel. In her open coffin, which was draped with white, sleeping her last sleep, lay Bernadette.

Was it the tomb of a mortal? Was it the throne of a queen in the midst of her kneeling people, or the couch of an affianced virgin, reposing invisibly on the Heart of Jesus, and at rest in the Lord?

Thus the people asked themselves, while every eye was in tears.

Bernard on her death-bed, taken by Mme. Lorans, photographer, at Nevers. Whether this is the effect of some false play of light and shade, or from some unfortunate retouch, we know not; but we regret that this detail should not be clear and apparent in the photograph, as it was in the reality.

Her hands joined, holding the blessed crucifix sent her by the Holy Father, her head slightly inclined upon the pillow, and crowned with white roses, her feet covered with flowers, amid four large tapers which shone like four stars, surrounded by her kneeling companions in religion, our Sister Bernadette slept in peace and rested in glory.

All the infantine charms of her innocent childhood had, unchanged and unfaded, passed with her through her pious life in the cloister, and outliving death, still rested on her peaceful brow.

Far from being altered in any painful manner by the last struggle, her features, naturally so delicately fine, wore new beauty and a super-human charm. Her countenance, pale and sweet, seemed as if conscious of some radiant dream. It was truly angelic, and indicated something of what the elect above must be, transfigured in glory.

Was not, then, the separation complete and absolute, between the spirit which flees to heaven, and the still remains left here below? Did the soul, doubtless admitted to eternal joys, find means to shine upon this inanimate body, which had been her earthly companion, illuminating it with some reflected image of her own felicity? Unfathomable mystery!

During the whole of Thursday and Friday, and the morning of Saturday, until the moment for the Mass and absolution, the body of Bernadette remained exposed.

It is impossible to describe the crowds which

thronged without intermission to the convent. Not only all Nevers besieged St. Gildard, but on the second day, the news being spread, trains and vehicles of every description brought pilgrims hastening from the surrounding towns and country. All classes, all professions, all ages were there; men, women, children, magistrates, working men, military officers, soldiers, nuns, priests, the Sisters and Mothers of all the communities in the town, seminarists and pupils of the Catholic schools walking in double ranks, made up the flood of this vast current of veneration which passed continuously and unceasingly before the child of our Lady of Lourdes.

Every one was anxious that some object belonging to him,—rosaries, pictures, medals, or books of devotion,—should touch the holy remains, as if this simple contact must convert each into a blessed souvenir, if not a sacred relic. From sunrise until sunset of these long days, four sisters, sometimes six, scarcely sufficed for this pious labour. It was necessary to wait at least half an hour before there was any possibility of approaching; but no one was weary, all were in recollection and prayer, and down many a manly face fell holy tears.

Before the evening of the first day, several shops in the city were entirely emptied of all their rosaries, pictures, medals, and statuettes. And then the multitudes, on arriving at St. Gildard, entreated the good sisters to sell them, at any price, any religious objects which might be touched by the venerated remains.

"We will not *sell* anything, my friends," they answered, "but we will gladly *give*."

And they despoiled themselves of everything of the kind at their disposal.

XXIV.

Being informed, by a telegram from the Rev. Mother Adelaïde Dons, Superior-General, of the death of Bernadette, almost immediately after she had breathed her last, we hastened to Nevers, once more to look upon her whose marvellous history we, although unworthy to do so, have related.

And thus, in the short space of a year and a half, Providence, while sending us sorrow upon sorrow, allowed us the sad consolation of ourselves closing the eyes of the great servant of our Lady of Lourdes, the venerable Curé Peyramale, and of laying in her flowery grave the pure and privileged maiden on whose brow the maternal eyes of Mary Immaculate had eighteen times visibly rested.

It was in the midst of these impressed multitudes that we found this child of predilection in her luminous repose, her couch decked with roses, and the virgin's crown upon her head, the crown of the betrothed at the nuptials of the Lamb. The Easter Alleluias echoed in the distance; all spoke of festal gladness, eternal love, and paschal resurrection, around the bridal tomb of this triumphant death.

And yet our tears flowed, and would not be

repressed, but there was no bitterness in them ; they sprang from deep and tender emotion, not from mourning. It is true that we wept on thus seeing her again, but it was less for her than for ourselves, our daily sins and weaknesses, our life, which is not a true death, by the side of this death which was true life.

And also we wept over the dangers which might threaten the work which the Blessed Virgin had founded by this humble shepherdess, and in our heart we entreated Bernadette and Mgr. Peyramale, whose memories in connection with it are inseparable, as they are also in the gratitude of the people, to intercede with God that He may protect it from all the snares of the enemy.

XXV.

On the morning of Saturday, April 19, the day of the obsequies, the courts and approaches to the convent were so thronged with people that it was found necessary at first to close the church to the public, until the clergy and deputations from the religious orders had taken their appointed places.

Mgr. Lelong, bishop of the diocese, who was in the midst of his pastoral visits, at some distance from Nevers, did not hesitate, upon receiving the announcement of Bernadette's departure, to suspend everything in order to come and pay the last honours to the humble and illustrious child confided by Providence

to his paternal hands. At his side were Mgr. Crosnier and the Abbé Dubarbier, his vicars-general.

In the choir a priest of venerable aspect was shedding silent tears. It was the Abbé Pomian, who had formerly prepared Bernadette for her First Communion. And it was while he was instructing her in the name of the Church that the Queen of all purity was also herself teaching her, and showing her the way to heaven.

The Rev. Father Sempé, Superior of the Missionaries at the Grotto of Lourdes, arrived also in time for the ceremony.

The sisters had closed the coffin. There was no sign of mourning in its white draperies, nor in all the church, except a light streamer of crape floating like a cloud among the gold candlesticks of the altar. On the rose-covered pall lay a radiant wreath, formed of all the spring flowers which were then in blossom; a spontaneous mingling of pansies and daisies with laurel and moss, which seemed symbolical of humility and glory; of leaves and flowers, suggesting the meditation of the mind in its search after all truth, and the seeking of the heart for everlasting love.

How full of solemn beauty were the chants of the Church! How eloquent in their emotion the words of the prelate, bidding farewell, "until we meet again," to her who, amid the joys of suffering, and in the love of her vocation,

had said, "I am the spouse of the Great King," and whom her Lord had now called into His kingdom.

After the conclusion of his discourse the bishop gave the Absolution, and the long procession left the nave, preceding the sleeping virgin.

And at this moment, (may we be pardoned for it,) on the very threshold of the church, as tearfully and slowly we followed this white coffin, two interior voices, awaking old memories of our childhood, irresistibly re-echoed in our heart. They were strophes of the Christian poet of our southern land,* in the native tongue of Bernadette, the golden dialect spoken by the Queen of Heaven at the rocks of Massabielle.

The first voice was like a sweet complaint, and it sang, with all the melancholy in the world,

"Las carréros diouyon gemi,
Tan bèlo morto bay sourti!
Diouyon gemi, diouyon ploura,
Tan bèlo morto bay passa!"

["The roads should mourn and be veiled in gloom,
So fair a corpse shall leave its home!
Should mourn and weep, ah! well-away,
So fair a corpse shall pass to-day."]†

* Jacques Jasmin, *L'Abuglo*. † Longfellow's translation.

And the second voice, like a hymn of triumph, made answer, with all the joyousness of heaven :

“ Las carréros diouyon flouri,
Tan bèlo nòbio bay sourti !
Diouyon flouri, diouyon grana,
Tan bèlo nòbio bay sourti !”

[“ The roads should blossom, the roads should bloom,
So fair a bride shall leave her home !
Should blossom and bloom with garlands gay,
So fair a bride shall pass this way.”]

And already the funeral train, leaving the vaulted cloisters, descended, forming an immense procession along the broad alleys of the convent garden.

The sunshine flooded with sweet radiance the responsive earth ; on every tree the young leaves, bursting their buds, spangled the branches with the fresh verdure of spring, while the soft breeze came, laden with fragrance, through the apple-trees in blossom, and the turf was starred with daisies and odorous with hidden violets. Creation, too, was singing its Paschal Alleluia, and the warblings of countless birds celebrated its new birth and its resurrection with its risen Creator. All this sweet joyousness of nature made a fit surrounding for Bernadette, who, borne by pious hands, preceded by the prelate, and accompanied by her sisters and mothers, was going to her rest in the Lord Jesus.

“ *Veni in hortum meum, soror mea sponsa.*—Come into My garden, My sister and My

spouse,"—these, in the *Song of Songs*, are the words of the heavenly Bridegroom.

And Bernadette in her silent repose seemed to say: "*Ego dormio et cor meum vigilat.....Vox dilecti mei pulsantis.*"—"I sleep, but my heart waketh.....It is the voice of my Beloved, knocking at the door."

And to these memories of the divine song arose on all sides the echoes of creation mingling with the chants of the Church.

Las carreros diouyon flouri.....

"The roads should blossom, the roads should bloom,
So fair a bride shall leave her home!
Should blossom and bloom with garlands gay,
So fair a bride shall pass this way!"

XXVI.

In the midst of the convent garden stands, solitary and graceful, a little chapel dedicated to St. Joseph, to which, as we have mentioned, Bernadette loved to go for meditation and prayer. It was built about thirty years ago, in fulfilment of a vow, by Mgr. Dufêtre, Bishop of the diocese.

It was there, at the foot of the altar, that Sister Marie-Bernard was laid.

A subdued light pervades this sanctuary from three stained windows, of which the central one above the tabernacle represents the patron of the Church universal, bearing the Divine Infant

in his arms. On the right and left two other great saints, alike occupying the whole height of the windows, appear to watch, like guarding spirits, over the tomb. The one carries a book, open like a two-leaved gate,—the gate of the Infinite,—inscribed simply with the words, *Civitas Dei*.

Ask of the immense pilgrimages which throng to the grotto of Lourdes, one in heart and soul, ask of these multitudes in prayer, obtaining from heaven the conversion of sinners, the consolation of the afflicted, and the cure of the sick; ask the Christian world if the work of which Mary, by the hands of Bernadette, laid the first stone, is not pointed out and comprised in the title of St. Augustine's book, and if it, too, has not its claim to be here below the *City of God*?

But Bernadette was not alone in this labour, and Providence willed that another memory should equally be recalled in the symbolic chapel which was at this moment to contain her tomb. It was fitting that the name of her indefatigable protector should also be there inscribed, the man chosen by our Blessed Lady, who appeared to Bernadette passing the beads of a rosary through her fingers. And thus, as if specifying the mission and designating the person, the other window represents the saint chosen to be the apostle of the holy Rosary, the Immaculate Virgin appearing to him, as she did to Bernadette, with the rosary in her hand. At his feet is the name *Dominicus*, the patron of Marie-Dominique Peyramale, Curé of Lourdes.

After the ceremony, in the course of the day took place the sealing of the leaden coffin which contained the venerated remains. What tears, though full of hope, were shed again when, lifting for the last time her bridal veil, her sisters in religion saw once more the beloved features of the betrothed of the great King.

Although this was the third day, death had not yet commenced his office of destruction. The body was supple as during life. The calm and pure countenance was in a luminous sleep. A little before the final sealing, the lips, fingers, and nails took a rose-coloured tint, to the amazement of all present;* and it was thus that Bernadette was seen for the last time.

A parchment sealed up in crystal, was placed in the coffin, at her feet. Its contents were as follows :

"Congregation of the Sisters of Charity and Christian Instruction, of Nevers;

"In the Mother House;

"The 16th day of April, in the year of Grace 1879;

"His Holiness Leo XIII. happily reigning;

"Under the episcopate of Mgr. Etienne (Stephen) Lelong, Bishop of Nevers;

"Mgr. Crosnier, Protonotary Apostolic, and M. l'Abbé Dubarbier, being Vicars-General;

* We are far from intending to give as in any way supernatural these phenomena which, although rare, are not without precedent, and may be perfectly explained by physiological laws. We confine ourselves to the relation of facts, presenting them in the exact circumstances under which they took place, and submitting them to the reader and his reflections.

"The Abbé Creuzard, Curé of the Parish;

"The Abbé Febvre, Chaplain to the Community;

"M. Grévy being President of the French Republic;

"The Rev. Mother Adelaïde Dons being Superior-General of the Congregation;

"Is piously deceased in the Lord,

"MARIE-BERNARDE SOUBIROUS, in Religion SISTER MARIE-BERNARD, born at Lourdes, January 7, 1844; baptized the 9th of the same month; clothed in her holy habit July 29, 1866; engaged to God by her first religious vows October 30, 1867, and by her perpetual vows September 22, 1878.

"It was to her, in the year 1858, and when she was still a child, that the Blessed Virgin appeared eighteen times at the grotto of Lourdes.

"It was to her that, naming herself, the Mother of God said, 'I am the Immaculate Conception.'

"It was to her that she addressed these words: 'I promise to make you happy, not in this world, but in the other.'

"It was by her that the Blessed Virgin Mary declared to the priests that she desired a chapel to be erected to her in that place, and that processions should be made to it; and this message she transmitted to the Abbé Peyramale, Curé of Lourdes.

"It was under the hand of the defunct, whose body reposes in this coffin, that at the command of Mary the miraculous spring flowed forth,

which from that time has cured so many sick from all parts of the world.

“ Her body being openly exposed on her bier, according to the custom of the Institute, in the chapel of the mother-house, immediately became the object of an universal concourse of public veneration. By order of Mgr. the Bishop, and permission of the civil authorities, it remained thus exposed until the moment of the funeral.

“ On this day, Saturday, April 19, it has been placed in the tomb, and is about to be sealed in this coffin, in presence of the witnesses whose names are here given.

“ Veritably certified.

“ Signed :

- “ Mgr. Etienne Lelong, Bishop of Nevers.
- “ Mgr. Crosnier, { Vicars-General.
- “ Abbé Dubarbier, {
- “ The Abbé Creuzard, Curé of the Parish.
- “ The Abbé Febvre, Chaplain.
- “ The Rev. Mother Adelaïde Dons, Superior-General of the Community.
- “ Sister Louise Ferrand, { Assistantes.
- “ Sister Marie Nathalie Portat, {
- “ Sister Eléanore Cassagnes, Secretary-General.
- “ Sister Joséphine Daynac, Conseillère.
- “ The R. P. Sempé, Superior of the Missionaries of Lourdes.
- “ The Abbé Pomian, Chaplain of the Sisters of Nevers at Lourdes.
- “ M. Henri Lasserre.”

Is this the end of the history of Bernadette? And will no heavenly sign, no extraordinary grace, be given near this tomb? Have no supernatural cures been even already obtained by the invocation of the child of our Lady of Lourdes? It is the secret of God; and when the Church shall have examined and weighed all these things, it is a secret which will be made known to the future.

THE END.

APPENDIX.

I.

The number of miraculous cures and conversions in which God has deigned to make the book entitled "Our Lady of Lourdes" instrumental in bringing the sick in soul or body to the feet of Mary, is exceedingly large, as is shown by the very frequent accounts of these cures which, during the last twelve years, have been published in France and elsewhere. We will quote two of these as instances, and, to keep only to the basilica of Lourdes, take the two supernatural cures represented in its windows, and which are two of the most remarkable facts of this nature operated by the water of the grotto and the intercession of our Blessed Lady who appeared at the rocks of Massabielle.

The first of these cures is that of Pierre Hanquet, of Liège, for eight years ill from a softening of the spinal marrow, which obliged him to lie down, bent up and motionless; his malady being further complicated by various kinds of wounds and purulent abscesses.

He himself related the following account, published at Liège, and reprinted in the *Annales de Notre Dame de Lourdes*, for February, 1870.

"The disease," he says, "grew worse and worse, gaining ground daily. *My body was being destroyed by corruption.* I felt at last that I must render up my soul to God, and this was henceforth the object of my desires. Calculating the amount of strength yet remaining to me, I was persuaded that the month of December would effect my deliverance.

"Heaven however had decided otherwise.

"On the 15th of October, 1869, my brother Dieudonné, when passing along the *rue de la Cathédrale*, turned into the shop of Mlle. Delforge, bookseller, and asked if she had anything which might interest and cheer me a little. Mlle. Delforge put into his hands the work of M. Henri Lasserre, *Notre Dame de Lourdes*.

"On that day I ended a novena of nine Fridays, during which I had asked our Lord many favours for my family and myself; but these favours seemed to be further off than ever, and I was almost beginning to despair of being heard, when my brother, who knew nothing of my novena, came in, bringing me this admirable book.

"I began at once to read it, and its perusal sent a thrill through the innermost fibres of my being. Every few pages I read my eyes filled with tears, and I then covered my face to hide them; but whenever my brother asked how I liked my new book, it was impossible for me to dissemble my emotion.

"When I came to the cures related in this volume, an interior voice three times said to me: '*And you also shall be cured.*'"

And in fact, as soon as the water of Lourdes, which had been written for to the Curé Peyramale, had arrived, and he had drunk a few mouthfuls, his brother also applying it to his body, Hanquet was perfectly and instantaneously cured.

"In a moment," he said, "all my miseries vanished like a dream,—curvature, phthisis, erysipelas, tumours, and other tortures of body and mind,—all disappeared. I could scarcely believe that I was the same man."

II.

The second case recorded in the historic windows is that of François Macary, of Lavour, who for thirty years had been suffering from monstrous varicose veins and ulcers in the leg.

The report of the Abbé Coux, inserted in the *Annales*, is as follows:

"François Macary, having consulted all the medical men in Lavour, and amongst them Dr. Laviquérie, received from one and all the same answer: '*Your complaint is incurable.*'

"His soul was in as bad a state as his body. Macary had given up all practice of religion, never attended Mass, except when obliged to do so by the rules of the Mutual Aid Society, to which he belonged, and during the long nights of sleeplessness caused by his frightful sufferings, he raged and blasphemed, while his pious wife prayed and wept.

"Last July, François, unable to move from

his easy chair, was a prey to intolerable *ennui*. Having heard some one speak of our Lady of Lourdes, and M. Lasserre's book, the thought occurred to him to read this book, in the hope that it might give him some distraction.

"He read it in two days, and during this time was often moved to tears.

"His wife had a happy foreboding, and he himself felt his heart unfolding to hope.

"On the evening of the 16th of July he was seized with an extraordinary restlessness, and could no longer remain in his easy chair.

"'Wife, we must go out.'

"'But it is imprudent.'

"'No matter, we must go; I can bear it no longer.'

"He went out, not knowing whither, and leaning on his wife's arm. Instead of going towards the promenades, only a few paces from his dwelling, he dragged himself into the town, and entered the house of one of his sisters, near the Church of St. Alain."

While there, he heard a priest, the Abbé Coux, author of the report, say that he had to go to Lourdes on the morrow.

"You are going to Lourdes?" exclaimed Macary. "Well, then, I beg of you to say to the Virgin down there, that there is at Labour a poor devil of a workman whose legs are one mass of corruption. Say that the suffering is more than I can bear. Let her either kill me or cure me."

The Abbé Coux promised; and three days

after, Macary received from him a small flask of water from the miraculous spring.

Let us now hear Macary.

"When I had this blessed water in my hands, I made haste to crawl to my room, and there, falling on my knees, I made a short but fervent prayer to the Virgin. Then, taking off my gaiters and bandages, and pouring some of the water into the hollow of my hand, I bathed my legs with it, and drank what remained in the flask; then I got into bed, and went to sleep.

"When I awoke about midnight, my legs were free from pain, and on feeling them with both hands, I found no trace of the swollen veins.

"My wife was in the next room, which opened into mine. 'Wife,' I cried out, 'I am cured.'

"'You are losing your senses. Come, go to sleep.'

"And I fell into a sleep such as I had not known for a long time indeed. On waking next morning, I lost no time in renewing my examination. Veins, ulcers, all had vanished. The skin was more smooth and supple than that of my two hands."

Two days afterwards Macary said to the priest: "Now I belong to you; the Virgin has cured my body; it is for you to cure my soul."*

* This account appeared in the *Annales de Notre Dame de Lourdes*, for September 30, 1871.





